

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 1996

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Report of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 1996. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goaslind, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Carlos E. Asay, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*² Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, John M. Madsen, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Dennis E. Simmons, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen

¹Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was excused.

²Elder Augusto A. Lim was excused.

Saturday, October 5, 1996

Morning Session

Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Lowell D. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 166th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We welcome all who are participating here in the Tabernacle; in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders L. Tom Perry, F. Enzo Busche, and Robert K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders W. Eugene Hansen, William R. Bradford, Glenn L. Pace, and Andrew W. Peterson are in attendance.

All of the General Authorities are here except Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi and Augusto A. Lim, who are serving as presidents of the Tokyo and Manila temples, respectively.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We express appreciation for the beautiful tropical flowers which have been provided by the Jamaica Kingston Mission.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." They will now favor us with "I Stand All Amazed." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder James O. Mason offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

In the spirit of that beautiful prayer offered by Brother Mason, may I say a few words in opening the conference. And we shall then hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We have gathered here in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Others are joining us in thousands of other halls and in their homes across America and across the world. We are deeply grateful for the means of communication afforded us by which we can speak to you and in most cases you can hear and see us. We feel of your warmth, your brotherhood, your faith, your sustaining prayers. Thank you, one and all.

A letter reports blessings of conference

Following a previous conference we received a letter from England. May I read it? The writer says:

"This last weekend, just a short while after our 40th wedding anniversary, we had the great pleasure to gather our children and grandchildren together to watch the general conference broadcast in our own home. . . .

"We had the wonderful blessing of being able to stand and raise our arms to the square as a family and sustain a living prophet, his counselors, together with the Quorum of the Twelve, and in our own home too!

"We give you our report: the voting was unanimous and in the affirmative, with not a single abstaining or dissenting voice.

"Our family of three sons have served honorable missions, to their great credit. Upon returning home they married fine and honorable young ladies in the temple, and together they are raising ten beautiful children. All the adults serve in leadership positions, and my wife and I are also delighted to be serving on a Church service mission. . . . How sweet have been the Lord's blessings to all of our family.

"All our family thank you for the inspiring instruction and uplifting talks that were given, and without hesitation

we tell you that the tears flowed freely as we truly sat at the feet of the Lord's servants. As we basked in the joy of having your presence in our home, we felt empty when the broadcast finished; it was like saying good-bye to loved ones. We all knelt down in prayer and felt the warm assurance of the Spirit all around us."

Prayer that messages will meet needs

It is an awesome responsibility to say a few words as we begin the conference. You have gathered to be encouraged, to be inspired, to be lifted and directed as members of the Church. We are all assembled together as believers in this, the cause of Christ. Each of us is His servant in building His kingdom in anticipation of the time when He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

You have gathered to be helped with your temporal concerns, your failures, and your victories. You have come to hear the word of the Lord taught by those who, not of their own choosing, have been called as teachers in this great work.

You have prayed that you might hear things that will help you with your problems and add strength to your faith. I assure you that we have prayed also. We have prayed for inspiration and direction. There is a constant prayer in our hearts that we will not fail the great trust the Lord has placed in us and the trust which you have placed in us. We have prayed that we might be prompted to say those words which will build faith and testimony and which will become answered prayers for those who will hear.

We are reassured by the word of the Lord that "he that preacheth [by the Spirit] and he that receiveth [by the Spirit], understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:22).

Sacrifice and legacy of the pioneers

One hundred and fifty years ago our people were leaving Nauvoo and threading their way across the prairies of Iowa. None of us, I am confident, can appreciate the measure of sacrifice which they made in leaving their comfortable homes to brave the tempests of the wilderness on a journey that would not end until they reached this valley of the Great Salt Lake. Their suffering was immeasurable. They died by the hundreds for this cause of which each one of us is a part.

I was in Palmyra this past summer, and in Nauvoo, and in Council Bluffs, Iowa, which they had called Kanessville out of respect and love for a loyal friend. I stood where the Grand Encampment assembled when they reached the Missouri River. I have been over the trail from the Missouri to this valley a number of times. For me it is always a sacred experience. I am so deeply grateful for our inheritance. We shall remember it in a special way next year when we commemorate the arrival of our pioneer forebears in this valley.

Ours is the blessing to live in a better season. The terrible persecutions of the past are behind us. Today we are looked upon with respect by people across the world. We must always be worthy of that respect. We must earn it, or we will not have it. We will be reminded of that principle during this conference.

Promises to those who listen

I invite you to listen, listen if you will by the power of the Spirit, to the speakers who will address you today and tomorrow as well as this evening. If you will do so, I do not hesitate to promise that you will be uplifted, your resolution to do what is right will be stronger, you will find solutions to your problems and your needs, and you will be led to thank the Lord for what you have heard.

We have become as a great family spread across this vast world. We speak different tongues. We live under a variety of circumstances. But in the heart of each of us beats a common testimony: You and I know that God lives and is at the helm of this His holy work. We know that Jesus is our Redeemer, who stands at the head of this Church which carries His name. We know that Joseph Smith was a prophet and is a prophet who stands at the head of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. We know that the priesthood was restored upon his head and that it has come down to us in this day in an unbroken line. We know that the Book of Mormon is a true testament of the reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our testimony of these and other matters will be strengthened, our faith will be deepened as we participate together in this great and sacred convocation.

For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Boyd K. Packer

Jesus calls the Twelve Apostles

In the course of organizing His Church, Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he

named apostles."¹ They were called from the ordinary paths of life.

Peter was the first called, and the Lord said to him, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven.”² This same sacred authority is inherent in the ordination of every Apostle.

Paul taught that the apostles and prophets were called “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and he declared that these offices would endure “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”³

The Apostasy and the Restoration

The Apostles in time were gone and, with them, the keys. Paul had prophesied of men being “carried about with every wind of doctrine.”⁴

And so it was; instead of unity of faith, there came division and disunity.

It was in this circumstance that young Joseph Smith prayed to know which of all the churches was true and which he should join.

Joseph’s vision of the Father and the Son opened this dispensation. Then came the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the same organization that existed in the primitive Church, built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.⁵

Some suppose that the organization was handed to the Prophet Joseph Smith like a set of plans and specifications for a building, with all of the details known at the beginning. But it did not come that way. Rather, it came a piece at a time as the Brethren were ready and as they inquired of God.

The Melchizedek Priesthood, the consummate authority given to man from God, was restored under the hands of Peter, James, and John. By them, the Lord said:

“I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them;

“Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times.”⁶

The First Presidency was in place by 1833; then two years later, in February of 1835, came the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. And that is as it should be. The First Presidency came first in sequence and stands first in authority. And true to the pattern, it was made of men called from the ordinary pursuits of life.

Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators

With the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in place, with the offices of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric revealed, the proper order of things prevails. But there is a difference. Perhaps President J. Reuben Clark said it best:

“Some of the General Authorities [the Apostles] have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of [this] people. They have the right, the power, and the authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the overall power and authority of the President of the Church. Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment . . . ; the resulting limitation . . . applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator.”⁷

Furthermore, President Clark said that among those of the Twelve and the Presidency, “only the President of the Church, the Presiding High Priest, is sustained as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the Church, and he alone has the right to receive revelations for the Church, either new or amendatory, or to give authoritative interpretations of

scriptures that shall be binding on the Church, or change in any way the existing doctrines of the Church.”⁸

It took a generation of asking and receiving before the order of things as we know it today was firmly in place. Each move to perfect that order has come about in response to a need and in answer to prayer. And that process continues in our day.

The ministry of the Twelve

“The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations.”⁹

Where the First Presidency cannot go, the Twelve are sent “to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places.”¹⁰ They are commissioned to go to all the world, for the word *Apostle* means “one [who is] sent forth.”¹¹

“Wherefore,” the Lord said, “in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word.”¹² And He promised, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”¹³

The Twelve Apostles “are called to be . . . special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world.”¹⁴ Each carries that certain witness that Jesus is the Christ. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that “every member of the Church should have the impressions on his soul made by the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Son of God indelibly pictured so that they cannot be forgotten.”¹⁵

From Nephi we know that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁶ Mormon told us that “the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the

covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men.” Mormon further explained that angels accomplish their ministry “by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.”¹⁷

Apostles have the gift of discernment

There is a power of discernment granted “unto such as God shall appoint . . . to watch over [his] church.”¹⁸ To discern means “to see.”

President Harold B. Lee told me once of a conversation he had with Elder Charles A. Callis of the Quorum of the Twelve. Brother Callis had remarked that the gift of discernment was an awesome burden to carry. To see clearly what is ahead and yet find members slow to respond or resistant to counsel or even rejecting the witness of the apostles and prophets brings deep sorrow.

Nevertheless, “the responsibility of leading this church” must rest upon us until “you shall appoint others to succeed you.”¹⁹

Warning to wrongful critics

The Lord warned us of those few in the Church “who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house.”²⁰

“Thy voice,” the Lord commanded the Twelve, “shall be a rebuke unto the transgressor; and at thy rebuke let the tongue of the slanderer cease its perverseness.”²¹

Some few within the Church openly, or perhaps far worse in the darkness of anonymity, reproach their leaders in the wards and stakes and in the Church, seeking to make them "an offender for a word,"²² as Isaiah said. To them the Lord said:

"Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned . . . but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

"But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. . . .

" . . . Because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

"They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation."²³

That terrible penalty will not apply to those who try as best they can to live the gospel and sustain their leaders. Nor need it apply to those who in the past have been guilty of indifference or even opposition if they will repent, confess their transgressions, and forsake them.²⁴

Unity of First Presidency and Twelve

Recently President Hinckley reminded the Brethren that, while we are men called from the ordinary pursuits of life, there rests upon us a sacred ministry. And we take comfort in what the Lord said to the original Twelve: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you."²⁵

While each feels his own limitation, there is strength in unity. Never in the history of the Church have the Brethren of the First Presidency and the Twelve been more united.

Each week we meet together in the temple. We open the meeting by kneeling in prayer, and we close with prayer. Every prayer is offered in the spirit of submission and obedience to Him who called us and whose servants and witnesses we are.

The Lord requires that "every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same" and that "the decisions of these quorums . . . are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity."²⁶ This we earnestly strive to do.

We know that we hold the power of the priesthood "in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation."²⁷ We think of those who have preceded us in these sacred offices, and at times we feel their presence.

We are overcome with what the Lord said of those who hold these sacred callings: "Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation."²⁸

Heed the counsel of the Lord's servants

During a very difficult time, the Lord gave the sternest warning that I know of in all scripture. It had to do with the building of the Nauvoo Temple. The Saints knew from experience that to proceed to build a temple would bring terrible persecution, so they delayed. The Lord extended the time and said, "If you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God."²⁹

Often overlooked in that revelation is a marvelous promise: "If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place."³⁰

Remember this promise; hold on to it. It should be a great comfort to those struggling to keep a family together in a society increasingly indifferent to, and even hostile toward, those standards which are essential to a happy family.

The promise is a restatement of what the Lord told the multitude: "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants."³¹

I repeat the promise that those who hearken to the voice of these men whom the Lord has raised up "shall not be moved out of their place."³²

But the promise was followed with this caution: "But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest."³³

A special witness that Jesus is the Christ

The most precious thing we have to give is our witness of the Lord, our testimony of Jesus Christ.

I certify to you that the 14 men with whom I share the ordination are indeed Apostles. In declaring this, I say no more than the Lord has taught, no more than may be revealed to anyone who seeks with a sincere heart and real intent for an individual witness of the Spirit.

These men are true servants of the Lord; give heed to their counsel. So, too, with the Seventy, who as especial witnesses carry an apostolic responsibility, and the Bishopric, worthy men of God. So, too, with the brethren and sisters across the world who are called to lead,

who have earned that knowledge precious above all else.

There are limits to what the Spirit permits us to say.³⁴ And so I close with my witness, my special witness, that Jesus is the Christ, that through a prophet-president He presides over this, "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."³⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 6:12-13.
2. Matthew 16:19.
3. Ephesians 4:12-13.
4. Ephesians 4:14.
5. See Articles of Faith 1:6; Ephesians 2:20.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 27:12-13.
7. J. Reuben Clark Jr., "When Are Church Leader's Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 9-10.
8. *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 107:33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 112:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 107:35; 124:128.
11. Bible Dictionary, "Apostle," 612.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 112:19.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
15. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Twelve Apostles* (address to seminary and institute faculty, 18 June 1958), 6.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.
17. Moroni 7:31-32.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 46:27.
19. Declaration of the Twelve Apostles, reporting March 1844 meeting of the Twelve, Brigham Young Papers, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 112:26.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 112:9.
22. Isaiah 29:21; see also 2 Nephi 27:32.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:16-17, 19-21.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.

25. John 15:16.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 107:27, 30.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 112:31.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 124:32.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 124:45.
31. 3 Nephi 12:1.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 124:45.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 124:46.
34. See Alma 12:9.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.

The chorus sang "Though Deepening Trials."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Though Deepening Trials."

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us.

Elder L. Aldin Porter

The First Vision changed the world

One hundred seventy-six years ago, an event occurred which lies at the very foundation of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. It is, in my judgment, the most significant event that has occurred in this world since the Son of God walked forth from the tomb a resurrected being. I refer to that first heavenly vision that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Let me read his words:

"It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

"After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I knelt down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God."

He then described a few moments of severe spiritual anguish, convincing him that the forces of evil were real and powerful. Then he continued:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the

sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"¹

That single event changed the future of the world. The appearance of the Father and the Son to the young prophet ushered in the dispensation of the fullness of times. It exemplified God's love for His children and changed the world forever.

Testimony comes by revelation

How can one know of a surety that Joseph Smith actually saw and conversed with the Father and the Son? How can one ascertain the truthfulness of our bold assertion that God speaks to the world today through His prophets? God has provided a way.

Speaking of the supernal glory of that First Vision, President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "Much has been written, much will be written, in an effort to

explain it away. The finite mind cannot comprehend it. But the testimony of the Holy Spirit, experienced by countless numbers of people all through the years since it happened, bears witness that it is true, that it happened as Joseph Smith said it happened, that it was as real as the sunrise over Palmyra, that it is an essential foundation stone, a cornerstone, without which the Church could not be 'fitly framed together.'²

I repeat: the testimony of the Holy Spirit bears witness that it is true. That testimony is the means, in most instances, by which God reveals truth to mankind. It is not a new or strange phenomenon but is as old as the human race. The scriptures are replete with examples of God communicating with man. By revelation Adam and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and all of the faithful former-day Saints came to know of sacred things.

Nephi of ancient days taught this principle to his people. He said:

"And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.

"But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught."³

The Holy Spirit does not teach the proud, the unteachable, the indolent, or the doubter. A deep desire for truth and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will prepare one's heart to be taught spiritual things.

The Spirit empowers missionaries

The Lord Jesus Christ directs His work on the earth by revelation through the Holy Spirit. The power of this reve-

latory Spirit moves and motivates an army of more than 52,000 missionaries who take the gospel message to the four corners of the earth. When they are successful in their work, it is because of the witness they bear, a witness accompanied and confirmed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord describes His emissaries as weak, unlearned, and despised. But He promises that through their efforts He will "thrash the nations by the power of [His] Spirit."⁴

When President Hinckley returned from the British Isles last fall, he told us of an interview he had with a member of the British Broadcasting Company Radio Services. The reporter asked President Hinckley, "How do you expect people to listen to these callow youth?" President Hinckley had to explain to some of us that *callow* meant immature, inexperienced, and lacking sophistication. Then he pointed out to this reporter that "people do receive them and listen to them. They are wholesome. They are bright, they are alert, they are . . . clean."⁵

And then at the general conference priesthood session held in October of last year, he said, speaking of the missionaries: "They are a miracle. . . . They speak out of their hearts with personal conviction. Each is . . . an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power comes not of their learning in the things of the world. Their power comes of faith and prayer and humility."⁶

Jesus' commandment to preach the gospel to all nations is obeyed as the servants of God bear testimony, in humility, across the earth. And the Lord responds to their sacrifices and bears witness of their words by revelation.

Too many deny the spirit of prophecy

Some years ago I enjoyed a stake conference assignment as a junior companion to Elder LeGrand Richards, who had, under the influence of this directing

Spirit, reorganized a stake presidency. We were driving home; he was very pensive. After a rather long period of silence, I asked him if there was something he would like to teach me. Quietly he said, "We have too many in the Church who deny the spirit of prophecy and of revelation." That was it—he said no more about it. As I reminisced about the calling of the new stake president that day, it occurred to me then that this Church could not function for even one day without the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

But ours is a day of dwindling faith and increasing skepticism about sacred things. Our time reminds me of the period just prior to the coming of the resurrected Savior to this continent. They were very dark days.

Mormon recorded the roots of the problems that beset Nephite society when he said, "And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation."⁷

Later Mormon continues: "And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face."⁸

Revelation continues today

We boldly assert that the spirit of revelation rests upon the Lord's living prophets, seers, and revelators.

President Spencer W. Kimball from this very pulpit bore his testimony when he said: "I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communi-

cation line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal."⁹

When the appointed servants of this Church speak under the influence of the Holy Ghost as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, their words are carried by the power of the Spirit to those whose hearts are open to revelation.

When, with heavenly power, that witness comes to a person, he or she will soon understand that personal sacrifice is its constant companion. The spiritual witness of these sacred things and the demands of sacrifice inevitably walk the road together. In time, one comes to understand the necessity of this and is filled with gratitude that it is so.

Spirit reveals most important knowledge

The most important knowledge to be gained in this life is that which comes by revelation through the Holy Spirit. This is not to belittle in any way information available in a multitude of disciplines or fields of study. But any of it individually or all of it together can never equal the importance of receiving the personal witness, borne on the wings of the Spirit, of sacred things. That witness brings light and certainty and peace.

I raise my voice and state again that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. This certain knowledge is independent of all mortal men, for this conviction has come to me by the Holy Spirit, as promised.

The kingdom of God on earth continues to move forward with dedicated missionary and member alike having the conviction confirmed by the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith saw God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It moves forward empowered by the assurance in the heart of each faithful member, individually, that those who lead us do so with the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

We must never lose this precious gift. We must pay whatever price of faith and obedience is required to retain this great blessing.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:14–17.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 52.
3. 2 Nephi 33:1–2.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 35:13.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 51.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 51.
7. Helaman 4:12.
8. Helaman 4:23.

9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 78.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” We shall then hear from Sister Virginia H. Pearce, first counselor in the general Young Women presidency.

The chorus and congregation sang “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Sister Virginia H. Pearce

Hoping we will be active and faithful

Several months ago my husband performed the baptism of a dear friend. As I sat in the service, my mind and heart raced over her years of preparation for that single event—the principles carefully taught, constantly observed, and quietly accepted, the acknowledgment of God’s hand in life events, the sweet confirmation of the Spirit as difficult but right choices were made. My mind recalled the past and rejoiced in the present, and I couldn’t help but anticipate the future. I hoped with all my heart that this good woman would remain actively connected to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the rest of her life—that she would continue to learn and live the gospel and experience the fulness of its blessings.

This morning, as I remember those hopes, I think about the 375,469¹ others who were baptized last year. And then I think of the rest of us, the roughly nine million who have stepped into the waters

of baptism sometime in the past. Though our stories are individual, each of us came to that ordinance having been taught the true doctrines of the kingdom, having felt the Spirit, having understood how the doctrines fit into the context of our lives, and having demonstrated a willingness to try always to live those truths.

It seems too hard to think about the possibility, even the probability, that not all of us will continue to “cling to the Church and live its principles.”² Many of us will leave and never return to this happy fellowship. Some of us will leave for a time and find our way back with a heightened sense of gratitude for participation in the kingdom of God on earth. The reality of life is that each of us is daily at risk for drifting or even marching into inactivity.

Church classes foster growth

There are so many things in place to help us remain active. This morning I

would like to talk about just one of them. I would like to suggest that the ordinary Church classroom is a powerful setting for steady and continued growth in the gospel.

Sunday School, priesthood, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, seminary, and institute classes may be held in dedicated buildings, under a tree, or in a home. But each class is part of a plan for lifelong gospel learning. We can have great expectations for the power of those learning hours! Church classes provide a place where we can repeatedly experience the very things that brought us into the waters of baptism, where we learn doctrine and receive the ratifying witness of its truth, where we come to understand how doctrine is applied in the reality of our daily lives and accept the challenge to change our behavior accordingly.

Teach, understand, and apply doctrine

The fundamental curriculum for all classes in the Church is the scriptures³—they contain the unchanging doctrines of the kingdom of God. These truths are what brought us into the Church. If we fail to continue learning them, we may not stay. “You shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom . . . that ye may be prepared in all things.”⁴

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.”⁵ How do we know which doctrine to teach each week? It is stated in the lesson objective. But how do we come to *understand* the doctrine in a way that it will change our attitudes and behavior?

In order to really understand, we have to see the way doctrine is applied. In the lesson manuals, the suggested stories, examples, activities, and games are intended to help the learners understand doctrine in real-life settings.

Because the daily life of people varies so much in the 160 different coun-

tries where we have organized classes, the stories and examples in the manuals may sometimes confuse the learners. Teachers can prayerfully make adaptations, always taking care that the learning activities chosen truly reflect the doctrine.

A teacher's goal is greater than just delivering a lecture about truth. It is to invite the Spirit and use techniques which will enhance the possibility that the learner will discover the truth for herself and then be motivated to apply it.

Learn and enhance teaching skills

Although some seem to be born teachers, teaching skills can successfully be learned. Where can you go as a teacher to enhance your skills? Could you watch and learn from others? Perhaps approach an admired teacher, asking him to observe and offer suggestions? What about your Primary presidency, if you are a Primary teacher, or your Sunday School presidency, if you teach Sunday School? Asking your ward teacher development coordinator for regular and specific help would put you in touch with a multitude of resources.⁶ We don't have to struggle alone in this Church. There is help everywhere. We can prayerfully and courageously seek to learn and practice new techniques.

Church classes affect Church activity

I had a conversation once with a young man I cannot forget. His story of activity, complete inactivity, and a return to activity included the description of two classrooms. He said: “When I was about 15, I started to have a lot of questions about the Church. I thought maybe there would be a chance to talk about my questions at church, but it didn't happen. In priesthood it seemed like most of the time everybody talked about the game the night before. Sunday School was about the same—maybe a little lesson

thrown in during the last five minutes where the teacher asked questions, and it was kind of 'guess-the-right-answer-from-the-manual-time.'"

Well, other things happened—late Saturday nights, a switch to an earlier meeting schedule—and soon the young man's attendance dropped to nothing. Several years passed by until he found himself in church again. This time his face lit up as he described his Sunday School class:

"The teacher was this unimpressive-looking guy, but he was so excited about what he was teaching. He didn't waste a minute. He asked important questions. Everyone had their scriptures. They looked up verses, shared ideas. They listened to each other. They talked about problems at school and how they fit in with the lesson. You could tell that the people in the class were all different, but they had one amazing thing in common—they were all interested in learning the gospel. After five minutes, I knew that this was a good place for me."

How to help class members learn

What a difference in those experiences! Can you imagine hundreds of thousands of classrooms every Sunday, each with a teacher who understands that "the learning has to be done by the pupil. Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all of the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members."⁷

A skilled teacher doesn't think, "What shall I do in class today?" but asks, "What will my students do in class today?"; not, "What will I teach today?" but rather, "How will I help my students discover what they need to know?"⁸ The skilled teacher does not want students who leave the class talking about how

magnificent and unusual the teacher is. This teacher wants students who leave talking about how magnificent the gospel is!

Create trust and safety in class

Learning occurs best in an atmosphere of trust and safety. This means that each person's questions and contributions are respected. When we feel safe and included, we can ask questions that will help us to understand the gospel. We can share insights and faith that might help someone else.⁹ We can stumble without embarrassment as we try to apply the lessons taught. Conversely, when we feel that we must protect and defend ourselves or seem more righteous than we are, our energy is used counterproductively and our learning and the learning of others is severely limited. Maintaining a climate of trust and safety is a responsibility the teacher and the learners share.

The beginning, middle, and end of class

I have heard Sister Janette Beckham, Young Women general president, talk simply about teaching a class. She says:

"It is the teacher's responsibility to introduce the lesson and help lay the groundwork. The middle part belongs to the students where they participate and work toward understanding and application. Then the teacher must watch the time, because she owns the last few minutes of class. She has a responsibility to clarify and summarize the doctrine taught so that learners will not leave confused about the message. Then she can bear personal testimony of the principle under discussion."¹⁰

A successful Young Women class

In conclusion, will you come with me into a classroom of 12- and 13-year-old

young women. Listen as you hear the learners discover doctrine. Notice the experience the teacher provides for the learners so that they can connect the doctrine to the reality of their lives. Feel the accompanying witness of the Spirit:

Our teacher moves her chair closer into the semicircle of five girls. "We have a guest waiting outside," she begins. "It is Sister Jonas. She has agreed to show us her tiny baby and tell us how she feels about being a new mother. As you watch this new little baby, would you also notice his mother—how she treats the baby, what she does, what she says. We'll talk about her visit after she leaves."

Sister Jonas comes in, spends seven or eight minutes talking about her baby and answering questions. The girls thank her, and she leaves the classroom.

"The baby was darling, wasn't he?" our teacher responds to the delighted hum of the class. "But what did you notice about the mother?"

A minute of silence and then a response: "Well, she was happy." Another: "She kind of rocked back and forth the whole time she was holding him." A few more responses, and then Katie slowly begins, "She—ummm—she talked really quietly."

"Could you say more about that?" the teacher coaxes.

"Well, her voice reminds me of my mother's voice when she called from the hospital to tell us we had a new baby sister last year."

The teacher, turning to the other girls: "What do you think? Did anyone else notice her voice?"

The girls become more thoughtful and begin to reply with words like "reverence," "heaven," "love."

The teacher: "I think I understand. I believe those words come to our minds because we are recognizing a great gift from our Heavenly Father. He loves us and trusts us so much that He is willing

to share His creative powers with us. We feel such gratitude and reverence for this trust. Motherhood is a *divine* role."

After this clear statement of doctrine and testimony, our teacher moves on to an activity where the girls identify qualities their own mothers exhibit that show an understanding of the divinity of motherhood. "Could each of you prepare for motherhood right now by practicing one of these very virtues—maybe being more patient, kinder, or more positive this week?"

Each girl talks about her choice. Our teacher bears personal testimony. The closing prayer is offered.

A simple class. No sensational stories. No scholarly class members—just ones who come prepared to participate. No extraordinarily gifted teacher—just one who prayerfully prepares and uses techniques that allow her to help class members understand and apply true doctrine.

Strengthen each other through classes

I telephoned our newly baptized friend last week to ask how things were going for her. Her response was enthusiastic: "My husband and I have been called to teach the 15- and 16-year-olds, and I'm learning so much!" I felt reassured and excited. What better place than a classroom—for her and for each of us!

President Hinckley encourages us: "We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today."¹¹ I would add: Every learner can be a better learner than he or she is today. And every classroom can be a better classroom.

I pray that we will continue to hold on to one another through effective classroom learning. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 28; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 21.
2. "Cling to the Church and live its principles and I do not hesitate to promise you that your lives will be happy, that your accomplishments will be significant, and that you will have reason to get on your knees and thank the Lord for all He has done for you in giving to you the marvelous and wonderful opportunities that you have" (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 3 Aug. 1996, 2).
3. See *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Curriculum* (1994), 1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77, 80.
5. "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).
6. See *Teaching—No Greater Call* (1978); *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Teacher Development* (1993); *Teach One Another* (videocassette, 1990).
7. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (1994), 14.

8. *Teaching the Gospel*, 13.

9. See Romans 1:11–12.

10. Unpublished talk.

11. "We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today. Every officer can be a better officer than he or she is today. Every father can be a better father, every mother can be a better mother, every husband can be a better husband, every wife a better wife, every child a better child. We are on the road that leads to immortality and eternal life and today is a part of it. Let us never forget it" (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 4 Nov. 1995, 2).

Additional references: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jacob 1:19; Alma 1:26; 29:8; Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 43:8; 50:22; 88:122.

President Hinckley

The women who speak in these conferences add a certain luster. Thank you, Sister Pearce, for your message.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight

I'm honored to be here, to be part of this great conference. I'm glad that the First Presidency saw fit to have me back on the program. As we get older we have some limitations. I understand mine, and sometimes we can learn to sort of plow around them. If our vision starts getting a little weaker, I've found that we can compensate by doing other things and plowing around that little weakness and maybe strengthening some others. But out of all of that, I want you to know of my love for the gospel and for my knowledge of its truthfulness.

"Now let us rejoice"

We were singing a great song as the intermediate hymn, "Now Let Us Rejoice," written by W. W. Phelps (*Hymns*, no. 3). That was written following an incident in Independence, Missouri, where Brother Phelps was the editor of a little newspaper. He had a printing press, and the people who were unfriendly toward the Church decided to do away with it, and the mob broke in and burned the building and destroyed the printing press. They burned some 200 homes of

the Saints in showing their displeasure over the people following this movement. In that despair W. W. Phelps wrote those words, "Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation. No longer as strangers on earth need we roam," bringing hope to the people and encouragement. With hope that those things will happen in our lives, we move on because of the truthfulness of what we are attempting to do.

The Lord's influence on His Apostles

I want all of you to know that I know that the work that we do is the gospel of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, as taught by Him when He was upon the earth, when He called Apostles and the disciples followed Him and He carried on His ministry in teaching them. I've often reflected upon the experience of when John and Andrew, these two young men, were introduced to the Savior by John the Baptist and they followed the Savior and stayed with Him that day, as it is recorded by John (see John 1:39). They were in His presence. They would have shaken hands with Him. They would have known the inflection in His voice. They would have heard Him testify who He is, that He came to do the will of the Father. They would have been in that holy presence. After having that experience, Andrew had to share it with somebody, so he found his brother Simon and took him to Jesus. Because of that feeling that Andrew had in his heart—that he had to share what he knew and what he felt and what he had seen—he shared it with his own brother as he brought him to the Savior. The holiness and personal influence of the Savior made an ordinary Simon into an extraordinary Apostle. (See John 1:35–42.)

Prophets are called of God

I have been impressed with all of the prophets since the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith—he who by revelation

received the message, the visit from God the Father and His Son, as Brother Aldin Porter has explained to us in detail this morning. I know that in order to usher in this work, that visitation took place, giving the Prophet Joseph Smith the vision and the determination and the ability to withstand all that he did in order to help bring about the Restoration. Heavenly messengers and revelations came to the Prophet Joseph Smith to help usher in this great work, which we declare to all the world and that I know to be true. I know that the prophets who have followed since the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith were all called of God.

The influence of President McKay

It is always thrilling to me to read more of the lives of those wonderful men. One of those I would like to mention this morning was President David O. McKay, who came into my life as the first prophet to teach and influence me personally.

I was called to be a stake president in California just before President McKay was sustained in a solemn assembly as the President of the Church and as our prophet. My wife, Ruby, and I drove to Salt Lake to be in attendance at that conference. I felt of that spirit, of that leadership, and of the direction that President McKay gave to the Church at that time. Later on I invited him to come to California to dedicate a Church building that we had just finished. That was in the days when we would raise half the money to buy the land and half the money to pay for a building—not like it is today, but where we felt a real ownership in the Church property and in buildings. President McKay came as a result of my invitation, which surprised me. We met him at the train and were pleased to have him in our home. That gave me a new vision of the magnitude and the breadth and the importance of the mission that we have here upon the earth to fulfill.

The influence of President Kimball

Later President Spencer W. Kimball became a great influence in my life. I am mentioning only a few Church Presidents because of the shortness of time here this morning. How President Kimball taught us! In his wonderful manner, he taught from the scriptures and discussed principles and policy and doctrine in a way that would help lift our hearts and souls. He told a story of a young soldier who had gone into the army. He had written a letter home to his parents saying that he had been at the shooting range learning how to handle a rifle and that he had been taught how to handle a hand grenade. In writing home, this young man said, "In learning how to handle a hand grenade, we were throwing duds, ones that weren't real." Then he said, "When we were throwing duds, I was able to get 35 feet away, but today they gave us the real thing and I got 80 feet away." President Kimball could touch our lives in a way that helped us see and understand things to be done.

President Hinckley on 60 Minutes

I want to remind you that six months ago, following conference on Sunday, we went home to listen to a television program. We were concerned for President Gordon B. Hinckley. (I had the privilege and the honor to watch him for a number of years before he became our prophet and leader. I watched the careful way that he carried on the affairs of the Church that had been his while he was a counselor to three Presidents.) President Hinckley was to appear on a nationwide television program, and we wondered how it would come across. We knew of the importance of it and what it would mean to us. We knew of the work and the hours of prayer and meditation and study that our prophet and leader had done in being prepared for this exposure which

would reach, according to the information we have received, some 35 million people. You will remember, as I remember now, the anticipation and the wonderment of how this would come across.

After that program was over, my heart was beating fast, and I felt it would burst. I was filled with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for the way our prophet and our leader had handled the interrogation by one who had a reputation of attempting to ask questions that might be difficult to handle. What a joy it was for us to witness how our prophet and our leader had been blessed and magnified! As I watched his face on the television (and I'm sure you would have had the same reaction), I realized that a vast number of people were seeing what a prophet of God looked like: a kind, good, and handsome man, clean and intelligent. You could see the outstanding character, the personality of our prophet and leader, who would be exposed to that vast audience of people. And then when the interrogator asked President Hinckley, "Do you really believe that story that heavenly beings appeared to that young boy in that grove of trees? Do you really believe that to be true?" And here our prophet just instantly said, "Of course I do. Isn't it great?"

Those words have been ringing through my ears ever since that happened: "Of course I do. Isn't it great?" He made that pronouncement with such confidence and with that wonderful personality he has, declaring it to all of the world. We want President Hinckley to know that since that time, missionary activity in the United States in the area where people who heard that program reside has picked up, and member activity has picked up too. More people have become interested in the Church because they have seen a living prophet in the flesh stand before that immense audience and declare to the world, "Of

course I do. Isn't it great?" We would hope and pray that the missionaries throughout the world would have that same feeling and that same understanding and that same determination—to want to so declare this message of hope and salvation and eternal life to all the world.

I thank the Lord every day for the health and determination I have to make the best use of every hour I have upon the earth to help in the spreading of this work. I leave you my love, my witness, and my own deep knowledge and conviction that it is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Thomas S. Monson

Christ heals at the pool of Bethesda

One of the most famous art galleries in the world is the National Gallery of Art, situated adjacent to Trafalgar Square in the city of London, England. The gallery has on display many priceless masterpieces.

Just a few weeks ago my wife, Frances, and I visited the National Gallery and admired the display of inspired genius which met our gaze and touched our hearts. A large painting occupied most of the wall of one room. It was an incomparable piece by the renowned Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, completed in the year 1670 and titled *Christ Healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda*. The centuries have not dimmed its beauty, dulled its appeal, nor diminished its impact.

I could not avert my eyes, nor could I transfer my thoughts. I was carried back through time as I saw the crippled man lying on his crude crutch with his arms extended and his hands upturned as he appealed to the Savior of the world. The words and thoughts expressed in the book of John coursed through my mind. I share them with you this morning:

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Haight, for your wonderful remarks. Brother Haight recently had his 90th birthday. He's a demonstration that age is only a state of mind.

The chorus has sung "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."¹

At length, after pondering this scripture, I left the reverie of the room; however, the impact of that masterpiece was indelibly impressed on my soul.

I have thought since of the majesty of the Master's command, the tenderness of His heart, and the incredible joy His act had brought to the afflicted man.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.
Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Savior of mankind!¹

Follow the Savior

Do we remember the question posed by one Pontius Pilate as he spoke to those who would shed the blood of Jesus and thus end His mortal life? "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified."³ And so He was.

The question each of us must answer is the same: *What shall I do with Jesus?* He Himself has provided us the answer: "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do."⁴

The mortal mission of our Lord was foretold by the holy prophets, as was His birth. For generations, enlightened mankind in the Old and the New World anxiously sought the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by righteous men inspired of Almighty God.

Then came that heavenly pronouncement to the "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."⁵ Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He

blessed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. He provided for you and for me the greatest gift we shall ever receive: the Atonement and all that it conveys. He willingly died that we might forever live.

Listen to the Savior

From time to time the question has been posed, "If Jesus appeared to you today, what questions would you ask of Him?"

My answer has always been, "I would not utter a word. I would listen to Him."

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, He said, "Follow me."⁶ To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me."⁷ To Levi who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."⁸ And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."⁹ Have we? Of Him it was said that He "went about doing good."¹⁰ Do we?

His beloved Apostles noted well His example. He lived "not to be ministered unto, but to minister";¹¹ not to receive, but to give; not to save His life, but to pour it out for others. It has been said, "If they would see the star that should at once direct their feet and influence their destiny, they must look for it, not in the changing skies [of] outward circumstance, but each in the depth of his own heart and after the pattern provided by the Master."¹²

Peter heals a lame man

Reflect for a moment on the experience of Peter at the Gate Beautiful of the temple. One sympathizes with the plight of the man lame from birth who each day was carried to the temple gate

that he might ask alms of all who entered. That he asked alms of Peter and John as they approached him indicates he regarded them no differently from others who must have passed him each day. I love Peter's simple and direct instruction: "Look on us."¹³ The lame man gave heed to them.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up. . . .

". . . He . . . stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple."¹⁴

The rich young man

Not all who approached the Master abided by His divine direction:

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

"And Jesus said unto him, . . .

"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

"And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."¹⁵

Randy Spaulding's faithful parents

Some time ago I received a touching letter from Randy Spaulding, who lived in northern Utah. The letter explained the composition of his family and then

the gradual onset of an illness that took his father from a healthy, strong individual to a weak and crippled middle-aged man. The father's physical condition deteriorated until he could not work, could not walk, became confined to a wheelchair, and was almost helpless.

Randy told how the family and ward members have taken over the care of the farm and have provided much help to the family. Father can no longer speak; Mother is his constant provider of care—yet neither of them has uttered or written those words, "Why us?"

Let me return to Randy Spaulding's actual words. He wrote: "One morning as I was thinking about the mundane things of life and hurrying out the door to begin the day, I happened to notice my father sitting in the corner of the room reading his scriptures. I stopped and went over to speak to him. I noticed the difficult circumstances he was under. With his right hand, he was trying to hold up his head enough to see me and read the Book of Mormon. I learned that at one of the most trying times, he still had enough faith to read about a God of love, a God of miracles who heals and makes us whole, and a God of life—eternal life. My father still believes. Oh, how I long to take him back in time to the Pool of Bethesda and to ask our Master if He would please have mercy on us, so that my father, also, could take up his bed and walk."

His letter continued: "That day I returned to my bedroom and thanked my Heavenly Father for a father and mother second to none."

The Lord will bless the humble

Let us remember that it was not the waters of Bethesda's pool which healed the impotent man. Rather, his blessing came through the touch of the Master's hand. From the beautiful Psalm we learn: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire

of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."¹⁶

He has heard, and He indeed has blessed you and yours. An angel wife and mother who, without stint, sacrifices her own comfort for the blessing of her eternal companion; neighbors with hands that help, hearts that feel, and whose feet and talents all come quickly to rescue—are manifested blessings of the Lord's promises. Though Bethesda beckons, the Lord has heard. Said He: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you."¹⁷

President Harold B. Lee comforted us with these words: "[Those] who have been denied blessings . . . in this life—who say in their heart, *if I could have done, I would have done, or I would give if I had, but I cannot for I have not*—the Lord will bless you as though you had done, and the world to come will compensate for those who desire in their hearts the righteous blessings that they were not able to have because of no fault of their own."¹⁸

On every side there are those who suffer pain, who endure debilitating illness, who battle the demon of depression. Our hearts go out to all. Our prayers ascend in their behalf. Hands that help are extended.

"Living what we pray for"

I love the sentiment contained in the words of the poem entitled "Living What We Pray For":

I knelt to pray when day was done
And prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone;
Lift from each saddened heart the pain,
And let the sick be well again."
And then I woke another day
And carelessly went on my way;
The whole day long, I did not try
To wipe a tear from any eye.
I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road;

I did not even go to see
The sick man, just next door to me.
Yet, once again, when day was done,
I prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone."
But as I prayed, into my ear
There came a voice that whispered
clear:

"Pause now, my son, before you pray;
Whom have you tried to bless today?
God's sweetest blessings always go
By hands that serve Him here below."
And then I hid my face and cried,
"Forgive me, God, I have not tried.
Let me but live another day,
And I will live the way I pray."

Mary Watson and Kathleen McKee

When I read the phrase from this poem "I hid my face and cried," the hallowed halls of memory prompt me to share a tender, personal account with you.

Long years ago, when I served as a bishop, I received notification that Mary Watson, a member of my ward, was a patient in the county hospital. When I went to visit her, I discovered her in a large room with so many beds that it was difficult to single her out. As I identified her bed and approached her, I said, "Hello, Mary."

She replied, "Hello, Bishop."

I noticed that a patient in the bed next to Mary Watson covered her face with the bedsheet.

I gave Mary Watson a blessing, shook her hand, and said, "Good-bye," but I could not leave her side. It was as though an unseen hand were resting on my shoulder, and I felt within my soul that I was hearing these words: "Go over to the next bed where the little lady covered her face when you came in." I did so. I have learned in my life never to postpone a prompting.

I approached the bedside of the other patient, gently tapped her shoulder, and carefully pulled back the sheet

which had covered her face. Lo and behold! She too was a member of my ward. I had not known she was a patient in the hospital. Her name was Kathleen McKee. When her eyes met mine, she exclaimed through her tears, "Oh, Bishop, when you entered that door, I felt you had come to see me and bless me in response to my prayers. I was rejoicing inside to think that you would know I was here, but when you stopped at the other bed, my heart sank, and I knew that you had not come to see me."

I said to Kathleen McKee: "It does not matter that I didn't know you were here. It is important, however, that our Heavenly Father knew and that you had prayed silently for a priesthood blessing. It was He who prompted me to intrude on your privacy."

A blessing was given; a prayer was answered. I bestowed a kiss on her forehead and left the hospital with gratitude in my heart for the promptings of the Spirit. It would be the last time I was to see Kathleen McKee in mortality—but not the last time I heard from her.

Upon her death, the hospital called with this message: "Bishop Monson, Kathleen McKee died tonight. She made arrangements that we were to notify you, should she pass away. She left for you a key to her basement apartment."

Kathleen McKee had no immediate family. With my sweet wife accompanying me, I visited her humble apartment. I turned the key in the door, opened it, and switched on the light. There in her immaculate two-room apartment, I saw a small table with a note resting beneath an Alka-Seltzer bottle. The note, written in her own hand, said: "Bishop, my tithing is in this envelope, and the Alka-Seltzer bottle contains coins covering my fast offering. I am square with the Lord." The receipts were written.

The sweetness of the night has not been forgotten. Tears of gratitude to God filled my very soul.

Caring and seeing with the heart

A message in a birthday card which I received a few weeks ago, from parents who last year lost a beautiful daughter to cancer, expresses this profound thought: "And what is as important as knowledge?" asked the mind.

"Caring and seeing with the heart," answered the soul."

This expression describes Bethesda's blessing. Of this divine truth I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 5:2-9.
2. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Hymns*, no. 141.
3. Matthew 27:22.
4. 2 Nephi 31:12.
5. Luke 2:8, 11.
6. Matthew 4:19.
7. John 1:43.
8. Luke 5:27.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. Acts 10:38.
11. Matthew 20:28.
12. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1971, 171; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 131.
13. Acts 3:4.
14. Acts 3:6-8.
15. Mark 10:17-22.
16. Psalm 10:17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 6:8.
18. *Ye Are the Light of the World* (1974), 292; italics added.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television, radio stations, and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The benediction will be given by Elder Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

Elder Jerald L. Taylor offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah, under the direction of Sister Kay Asay, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of the Church.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Richard G. Scott, Angel Abrea, and Lowell D. Wood are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Charles Didier, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Cecil O. Samuelson, and Bishop Keith B. McMullin are attending

the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by a Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah, under the direction of Sister Kay Asay, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing a medley of "To Think about Jesus," "I Thank Thee, Dear Father," "For Thy Bounteous Blessings," and "Stand for the Right." The invocation will be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy.

The choir sang a medley of "To Think about Jesus," "I Thank Thee, Dear Father," "For Thy Bounteous Blessings," and "Stand for the Right."

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly." President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has asked that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elder Carlos E. Asay and that he be designated as an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Earl C. Tingey as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Those who may wish to join us in releasing with a vote of thanks Elder Stephen D. Nadauld as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency and Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as second counselor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as counselors to Jack H. Goaslind, the president of the Young Men, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency and Elder F. David Stanley as second counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Doctrinal teachings concerning *desire*

Brothers and sisters, the scriptures offer us so many doctrinal diamonds. And when the light of the Spirit plays upon their several facets, they sparkle with celestial sense and illuminate the path we are to follow.

Exemplifying this happy reality are the doctrinal teachings concerning *desire*, which relates so directly to our moral agency and our individuality. Whether in their conception or expression, our desires profoundly affect the use of our moral agency. Desires thus become real determinants, even when, with pitiful naïveté, we do not really want the consequences of our desires.

Desire denotes a real longing or craving. Hence, righteous desires are much more than passive preferences or fleeting feelings. Of course our genes, circumstances, and environments matter very much, and they shape us significantly. Yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability.

Therefore, what we insistently desire, over time, is what we will eventually become and what we will receive in eternity. "For I [said the Lord] will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9; see also Jeremiah 17:10). Alma said, "I know that [God] granteth unto men according to their desire . . . ; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men . . . according to their wills" (Alma 29:4). To reach this equitable end, God's canopy of mercy is stretched out, including "all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of [the gospel], who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, accord-

ing to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:8-9).

God thus takes into merciful account not only our desires and our performance, but also the degrees of difficulty which our varied circumstances impose upon us. No wonder we will not complain at the final judgment, especially since even the telestial kingdom's glory "surpasses all understanding" (D&C 76:89). God delights in blessing us, especially when we realize "joy in that which [we] have desired" (D&C 7:8).

However, in contrast to God's merciful plan for our joy and glory, Satan "[desires] that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Acknowledge responsibility for desires

Mostly, brothers and sisters, we become the victims of our own wrong desires. Moreover, we live in an age when many simply refuse to feel responsible for themselves. Thus, a crystal-clear understanding of the doctrines pertaining to desire is so vital because of the spreading effluent oozing out of so many unjustified excuses by so many. This is like a sludge which is sweeping society along toward "the gulf of misery and endless wo" (Helaman 5:12). Feeding that same flow is the selfish philosophy of "no fault," which is replacing the meek and apologetic "my fault." We listen with eager ear to hear genuine pleas for forgiveness instead of the ritualistic "Sorry. I hope I can forgive myself."

Some seek to brush aside conscience, refusing to hear its voice. But that deflection is, in itself, an act of choice, because we so desired. Even when the light of Christ flickers only faintly in the darkness, it flickers nevertheless. If one averts his gaze therefrom, it is because he so desires.

Like it or not, therefore, reality requires that we acknowledge our responsibility for our desires. Brothers and sisters, which do we really desire, God's plans for us or Satan's?

Righteous desires

Whenever spiritually significant things are under way, righteous desires are present. Meek desire characterized those awaiting baptism at the waters of Mormon. With their baptismal commitments spelled out specifically, "they . . . exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts" (Mosiah 18:11). The Nephite multitude, enraptured by the presence of the resurrected Jesus, knelt in humble and intensive prayer, yet "they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire" (3 Nephi 19:24).

No wonder desires also determine the gradations in outcomes, including why "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14; see D&C 95:5).

It is up to us. God will facilitate, but He will not force.

Righteous desires need to be relentless, therefore, because, said President Brigham Young, "the men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom, will find that they must battle every day" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:14). Therefore, true Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors.

Absence of desire

The absence of any keen desire—merely being lukewarm—causes a terrible flattening (see Revelation 3:15). William R. May explained such sloth: "The soul in this state is beyond mere sadness and melancholy. It has removed itself from the rise and fall of feelings; the very root of its feelings in desire is dead. . . . To be a man is to desire. The

good man desires God and other things in God. The sinful man desires things in the place of God, but he is still recognizably human, inasmuch as he has known desire. The slothful man, however, is a dead man, an arid waste. . . . His desire itself has dried up" ("A Catalogue of Sins," quoted in *Christian Century*, 24 Apr. 1996, 457).

This sad condition is yet another variation of the "sorrowing of the damned" (Mormon 2:13).

Even a spark of desire can begin change. The prodigal son, sunk in despair, nevertheless desired and "came to himself," determining that "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:17–18).

Educating our desires

What we are speaking about is so much more than merely deflecting temptations for which we somehow do not feel responsible. Remember, brothers and sisters, it is our own desires which determine the sizing and the attractiveness of various temptations. We set our thermostats as to temptations.

Thus, educating and training our desires clearly requires understanding the truths of the gospel, yet even more is involved. President Brigham Young confirmed, saying, "It is evident that many who understand the truth do not govern themselves by it; consequently, no matter how true and beautiful truth is, you have to take the passions of the people and mould them to the law of God" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55).

"Do you," President Young asked, "think that people will obey the truth because it is true, unless they love it? No, they will not" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55). Thus, knowing gospel truths and doctrines is profoundly important, but we must also come to love them. When we love them, they will move us and help our desires and outward works to become more holy.

Each assertion of a righteous desire, each act of service, and each act of worship, however small and incremental, adds to our spiritual momentum. Like Newton's Second Law, there is a transmitting of acceleration as well as a contagiousness associated with even the small acts of goodness.

Fortunately for us, our loving Lord will work with us, "even if [we] can [do] no more than desire to believe," providing we will "let this desire work in [us]" (Alma 32:27). Therefore, declared President Joseph F. Smith, "the education then of our desires is one of far-reaching importance to our happiness in life" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 297). Such education can lead to sanctification until, said President Brigham Young, "holy desires produce corresponding outward works" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:170). Only by educating and training our desires can they become our allies instead of our enemies!

Dissolve wrong desires; strengthen good ones

Some of our present desires, therefore, need to be diminished and then finally dissolved. For instance, the biblical counsel "let not thine heart envy sinners" is directed squarely at those with a sad unsettlement of soul (Proverbs 23:17). Once again, we must be honest with ourselves about the consequences of our desires, which follow as the night, the day. Similarly, faced with life's so-called bad breaks, the natural man desires to wallow in self-pity; therefore this desire must go too.

But dissolution of wrong desires is only part of it. For instance, what is now only a weak desire to be a better spouse, father, or mother needs to become a stronger desire, just as Abraham experienced divine discontent and desired greater happiness and knowledge (see Abraham 1:2).

Our merciful and long-suffering Lord is ever ready to help. His "arm is lengthened out all the day long" (2 Nephi 28:32), and even if His arm goes ungrasped, it was unarguably there! In the same redemptive reaching out, our desiring to improve our human relationships usually requires some long-suffering. Sometimes reaching out is like trying to pat a porcupine. Even so, the accumulated quill marks are evidence that our hands of fellowship have been stretched out too!

It is up to us. Therein lies life's greatest and most persistent challenge. Thus, when people are described as "having lost their desire for sin," it is they, and they only, who deliberately decided to lose those wrong desires by being willing to "give away all [their] sins" in order to know God (Alma 22:18).

Parents assist in educating desires

Unquestionably, parents have such a profound role in assisting in the educating of our desires, especially when parents combine explanation and exemplification! Even so, given our responsibilities for our own desires, we should not be surprised that Adam and Eve, such superb parents who conscientiously taught all things to their children, still lost some of them! Lehi and Sariah made the same effort, doing so "with all the feeling of a tender parent" (1 Nephi 8:37). Yet they experienced the same thing with Laman and Lemuel, who "understood not the dealings of the Lord" (Mosiah 10:14). Fixing responsibility for such recalcitrance where it should be, the Prophet Joseph Smith observed: "Men who have no principle of . . . truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, because there is no desire for righteousness in them" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 96).

Nevertheless, conscientious and able parents will do all they can do to exemplify and explain. Besides, righteous parents are teaching more than they now realize. The later applications of and the grateful expressions for earlier parental influence are often delayed, and often for a long time.

With true desire, we can then really plead:

More holiness give me, . . .
 More patience in suffering,
 More sorrow for sin,
 More faith in my Savior, . . .
 More tears for his sorrows,
 More pain at his grief,
 More meekness in trial,
 More praise for relief.
 ["More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*,
 no. 131]

Begin now to train desires

Brothers and sisters, a loving God will work with us, but the initiating particle of desire which ignites the spark of resolve must be our own!

It all takes time. Said the Prophet Joseph: "The nearer man approaches

perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 51).

Thus the work of eternity is not done in a moment, but, rather, in "process of time." Time works for us when our desires do likewise!

May God help us so to train our desires, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder M. Russell Ballard, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Bruce C. Hafen, who was sustained at April conference as a new member of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Faith in every footstep

This year, 1996, we have enjoyed a great centennial celebration of statehood in Utah that has given our citizens an opportunity to reflect upon the important accomplishments of the past 100 years. In 1997 the Church will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley. During the sesquicentennial year, Church members worldwide will have the opportunity to focus their attention on the pioneer trek from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley. The theme for the sesquicentennial celebration is "Faith in Every Footstep."

Sacrifices of pioneers

This August I walked in the footsteps of our pioneers along the Mormon Trail through Wyoming and Utah. I wondered why our dedicated ancestors suffered so terribly and yet willingly faced such tremendous obstacles. Perhaps one reason they sacrificed and endured was to leave a legacy of faith for all of us to help us feel our urgent responsibility to move forward in building up the Church throughout the world. We need the same dedication today in every one of our footsteps as the pioneers had in theirs.

President Joseph F. Smith, who walked the pioneer trail to Utah as a nine-year-old boy, said in the April 1904 general conference, "I firmly believe [that] the divine approval, blessing and favor of Almighty God . . . has guided the destiny of His people from the organization of the Church until the present . . . and guided us in our footsteps and in our journeyings into the tops of these mountains."¹ Our pioneer ancestors sacrificed virtually all they had, including their lives in many cases, to follow a prophet of God to this chosen valley.

Plan sesquicentennial celebrations

Next year's celebration will honor pioneers worldwide, in addition to the Utah pioneers. As chairman of the Church sesquicentennial committee, I ask you stake and ward leaders to place the Church sesquicentennial celebration on your next council meeting agenda. Please study the guidelines sent to you in January 1995 and the additional information sent in intervening months. In your councils, choose the activities that will be appropriate and important to ensure a spiritually fulfilling experience for your members in 1997.

Magnitude of the pioneer trek

The vast majority of the Utah pioneers got their first glimpse of the sagebrush, sego lily, salt-flat desert landscape of this Great Salt Lake Valley on foot. Some even arrived barefoot after having suffered extreme hardships in traversing over 1,300 miles of prairie, desert, and mountain wilderness. Before the railroad reached the Utah Territory in 1869, approximately 70,000 pioneers, 9,600 wagons, and 650 handcarts made the trek from Winter Quarters in present-day Iowa and Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley.² Each pioneer who walked from the Mississippi River to the Great Salt Lake took millions of steps to travel that

distance. Under favorable circumstances, the trek took a little more than three months. Traveling 15 miles in a day was considered a good day. In total, billions of footsteps of faith were taken by our pioneers.

On the trail a loving attachment frequently developed between a pioneer and his ox team. Joseph F. Smith related: "My team leaders' names were Thom and Joe—we raised them from calves, and they were both white. Thom was trim built, active, young, and more intelligent than many a man. Many times while traveling sandy or rough roads, on long, thirsty drives, my oxen were lowing with the heat and fatigue. I would put my arms around Thom's neck and cry bitter tears! That was all I could do. Thom was my favorite and best and most willing and obedient servant and friend."³

Visions of the Saints' destination

The pioneer exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, began February 4, 1846. Nearly four years earlier, in August of 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith shared his foreknowledge of the trek west: "I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some [would live to] build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains."⁴

Brigham Young received a vision of Joseph Smith in which Joseph showed him a mountain and an ensign upon its peak. Joseph said, "Build under the point where the colors fall and you will prosper and have peace."⁵ The identification of this mountain peak, as the Saints entered Salt Lake Valley in July 1847, confirmed to President Young that the pioneers had found their destina-

tion, their Zion, in the tops of the mountains.

We know this conical, dome-shaped mountain today as Ensign Peak. It rises above the valley floor just north of where we now sit.

The exodus from Nauvoo and across the prairies, rivers, and mountains to the Salt Lake Valley was a migration of major proportions. Near Mount Pisgah, one of the communities the Saints established in Iowa, Wilford Woodruff recorded: "I stopped my carriage [and] had a most splendid view. I could stand and gaze to the east, west, north, and south and behold the Saints pouring out . . . from the hills and dales . . . with their teams, wagons, flocks, and herds by hundreds and thousands . . . until it looked like the movements of a great nation."⁶

Difficulty and length of the trek

As the pioneers traveled across Iowa, their worries centered on food and forage, wood and fire, and ceaseless snow, rain, and mud. "A broken axle or a missing ox became a crisis."⁷ Tragic illness overcame many who were wet, chilled, weak, and malnourished.

The 265-mile trek from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters took 131 days. By comparison, the trek from Winter Quarters to the Salt Lake Valley, which was about four times the distance, approximately 1,032 miles, took only 111 days.⁸

Peter and Jenetta McBride

Perhaps the most memorable pioneer stalwarts were the Saints who made the journey in handcart companies. These companies brought nearly 3,000 pioneers west between 1856 and 1860.⁹ In 1856, two handcart companies, with 1,075 pioneers under the leadership of James G. Willie and Edward Martin, left later in the year than planned, and they encountered early winter storms in present-day Wyoming.¹⁰ Peter Howard Mc-

Bride, then but a boy of six years, was a member of the Martin Company. His father, after helping push handcarts through the icy river, died in the snow and freezing cold that night. Peter's mother was sick; his older sister, Jenetta, watched out for the younger children. Her shoes had worn out, and her feet left bloody tracks in the snow. On the banks of the Sweetwater River, the wind blew their tent down during the night. Everyone scampered out as the snow covered the tent—everyone except little Peter. According to his account: "In the morning I heard someone say, 'How many are dead in this tent?' My sister said, 'Well, my little brother must be frozen to death in that tent.' So they jerked the tent loose, sent it scurrying over the snow. My hair was frozen to the tent. I picked myself up and came out quite alive, to their surprise."¹¹

Jens Neilson

We find one of the most touching stories of sacrifice, faith, and loving charity in the life of Jens Neilson, who was a member of the Willie Handcart Company. Jens, a relatively prosperous Danish farmer, heeded the call to bring his family to Zion. In Iowa he wrote that he had let all of his money go to the Church except enough to buy a handcart and stock it with 15 pounds of belongings per person. Jens wrote, "Obedience is better than sacrifice."¹²

The people for whom Jens was responsible were himself; his wife, Elsie; their six-year-old son, Neils; and a nine-year-old girl, Bodil Mortensen, whom Jens offered to take to Utah. In the early Wyoming blizzard, temperatures plummeted below zero. The Neilsons had consumed their last pound of flour days before, but somehow they made it over the treacherous Rocky Ridge, urged on by their indomitable courage and unconquerable faith. Tragically, 13 of the company died at Rock Creek and were

buried in shallow, snow-covered graves—among them, Jens and Elsie's son, Neils, and young Bodil Mortensen.

President Hinckley describes this portion of the trail as “a trail of tragedy, a trail of faith, a trail of devotion, a trail of consecration, even the consecration of life itself.”¹³

Jens arrived at Rock Creek, 11 miles beyond Rocky Ridge, with both feet frozen. He was unable to walk another step and pleaded with Elsie, “Leave me by the trail in the snow to die, and you go ahead and try to keep up with the company and save your life.” Elsie, with her unfaltering pioneer courage, replied, “Ride, I can't leave you, I can pull the cart.”¹⁴ Such was the strength and the faith of many pioneer women on the trail.

Margaret McNeil

A cow helped provide necessary nourishment on the trail for the family of my great-grandmother Margaret McNeil as she came to Zion from Scotland. As a 12-year-old, it was Margaret's task to arise early and get breakfast for the family and milk her cow. She would then drive the cow on ahead of the company to let it feed in the grassy places. She wrote:

“The cow furnished us with milk, our chief source of food. . . . Had it not been for the milk, we would have starved. . . .

“One night our cow ran away from [the] camp, and I was sent to bring her back. I was not watching where I was going and was barefooted. All of a sudden I began to feel I was walking on something soft. I looked down to see what it could be, and to my horror found that I was standing in a bed of snakes, large ones and small ones. At the sight of them I became so weak I could scarcely move; all I could think of was to pray, and in some way I jumped out of them. The Lord blessed and cared for me.

“We arrived in Ogden, Utah, on the fourth day of October [1859], after a journey of hardships and hunger. . . . I walked every step of the way across the plains.”¹⁵

The Lord's protective hand

President Joseph F. Smith, who took part in the westward trek and in the first 70 years of hardship in this valley, shared this precious overview of the Lord's protective hand over His Latter-day Saints:

“Our good friends from the east used to come out here in the early days and upbraid us. They said, ‘Why, it is the fulfillment of the curse of God upon you. You have been driven away from the rich lands of Illinois and Missouri, into a desert, into a salt land.’ I said, ‘Yes, we have salt enough here to save the world, thank God, and we may find use for it by and by.’”¹⁶

There was a time when there wasn't feed for livestock and the beef was so lean there wasn't enough fat to even make decent soap. “Just then the Lord sent a handful of alfalfa seed into the valley, and Christopher Layton planted it, watered it, and it matured; and from that little beginning, Utah can now produce a richer crop of hay than Illinois or Missouri can do.”¹⁷

Walk in the footsteps of the pioneers

Truly the Lord encourages us to walk in faith to the edge of the light and beyond—into the unknown. After the trial of our faith, He once again shines the light ahead of us, and our journey of faith in every footstep continues. Now it has swelled into billions and billions of footsteps throughout the world. In my 20 years as a General Authority, I have seen the worldwide expansion of the Church, and I marvel at the results of the work of our pioneers in every country where they, through their faith and sacrifice, established the Church. I share the feel-

ings of President Heber J. Grant, who said, "I can never think of [the pioneers] but I am full of admiration and gratitude, and utter a prayer to the Lord to help me, as one of the descendants of that noble band, to be loyal, to be true, to be faithful as they were!"¹⁸

Brothers and sisters, join with us and begin now to prepare for a spiritual journey next year by walking in the footsteps of our beloved pioneers in every land. We must be sure that the legacy of faith received from them is never lost. Let their heroic lives touch our hearts, and especially the hearts of our youth, so the fire of true testimony and unwavering love for the Lord and His Church will blaze brightly within each one of us as it did in our faithful pioneers. Their accomplishments were possible because they knew, as I know, that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, restored the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that this Church will continue to roll forth until it fills the whole earth. To this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1904, 1.
2. See Stanley B. Kimball, *Historic Resource Study: Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail* (1991), 40, 49, 62–63.
3. Holograph quoted in Susan Arrington Madsen, *I Walked to Zion* (1994), 37.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 255.
5. See George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:85.
6. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (1983–85), 3:55; spelling and punctuation modernized.
7. Reed C. Durham Jr., "The Iowa Experience: A Blessing in Disguise," *Brigham Young University Studies*, fall 1981, 463; see also 474.
8. See Kimball, *Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail*, 35, 49.
9. See Kimball, *Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail*, 66.
10. See Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West*, 6 vols. (1939–51), 6:360–61.
11. Peter Howard McBride, quoted in Madsen, *I Walked to Zion*, 45–46; see also 41, 43.
12. See Jens Neilson journal, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1996), 29.
13. Address delivered near Riverton, Wyoming, 15 Aug. 1992, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1995), 27.
14. See Jens Neilson journal, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1996), 29.
15. Margaret McNeil Ballard autobiography, quoted in Madsen, *I Walked to Zion*, 126.
16. "This Is the Place," in Preston Nibley, comp., *Faith Promoting Stories* (1943), 81; see also *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 1917, 157.
17. Joseph F. Smith, in Nibley, *Faith Promoting Stories*, 83; see also *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 1917, 159.
18. In Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 7.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract

Three summers ago I watched a new bride and groom, Tracy and Tom, emerge from a sacred temple. They laughed and held hands as family and friends gathered

to take pictures. I saw happiness and promise in their faces as they greeted their reception guests, who celebrated publicly the creation of a new family. I wondered that night how long it would be until these two faced the opposition

that tests every marriage. Only then would they discover whether their marriage was based on a *contract* or a *covenant*.

Another bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, "Mom, I'm at the end of all my troubles!" "Yes," replied her mother, "but at which end?" When troubles come, the parties to a *contractual* marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they're receiving what they bargained for. But when troubles come to a *covenant* marriage, the husband and wife work them through. They marry to give and to grow, bound by covenants to each other, to the community, and to God. *Contract* companions each give 50 percent; *covenant* companions each give 100 percent.

Marriage is by nature a covenant, not just a private contract one may cancel at will. Jesus taught about contractual attitudes when he described the "hireling," who performs his conditional promise of care only when he receives something in return. When the hireling "seeth the wolf coming," he "leaveth the sheep, and fleeth . . . because he . . . careth not for the sheep." By contrast, the Savior said, "I am the good shepherd, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep."¹ Many people today marry as hirelings. And when the wolf comes, they flee. This idea is wrong. It curses the earth, turning parents' hearts away from their children and from each other.²

An eternal perspective of marriage

Before their marriage, Tom and Tracy received an eternal perspective on covenants and wolves. They learned through the story of Adam and Eve about life's purpose and how to return to God's presence through obedience and the Atonement. Christ's life is the story of giving the Atonement. The life of Adam and Eve is the story of receiving the Atonement, which empowered

them to overcome their separation from God and all opposition until they were eternally "at one" with the Lord and with each other.

Without the Fall, Lehi taught, Adam and Eve would never have known opposition. And "they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery."³ Astute parents will see a little connection here—no children, no misery! But left in the garden, Adam and Eve could never know joy. So the Lord taught them they would live and bear children in sorrow, sweat, and thorns.

Still, the ground was cursed *for their sake*:⁴ their path of affliction also led to the joy of both redemption and comprehension.⁵ That is why the husband and wife in a covenant marriage sustain and lift each other when the wolf comes. If Tom and Tracy had understood all this, perhaps they would have walked more slowly from the gardenlike temple grounds, like Adam and Eve, arm in arm, into a harsh and lonely world.

And yet—marrying and raising children *can* yield the most valuable religious experiences of a couple's lives. Covenant marriage requires a total leap of faith: they must keep their covenants without knowing what risks that may require of them. They must surrender unconditionally, obeying God and sacrificing for each other. Then they will discover what Alma called "incomprehensible joy."⁶

Of course, some have no opportunity to marry. And some divorces are unavoidable. But the Lord will ultimately compensate those faithful ones who are denied mortal fulfillment.

The "wolf" of natural adversity

Every marriage is tested repeatedly by three kinds of wolves. The first wolf is natural adversity. After asking God for years to give them a first child, David and Fran had a baby with a serious

heart defect. Following a three-week struggle, they buried their newborn son. Like Adam and Eve before them, they mourned together, brokenhearted, in faith before the Lord.⁷

The "wolf" of personal imperfections

Second, the wolf of their own imperfections will test them. One woman told me through her tears how her husband's constant criticism finally destroyed not only their marriage but her entire sense of self-worth. He first complained about her cooking and housecleaning, and then about how she used her time, how she talked, looked, and reasoned. Eventually she felt utterly inept and dysfunctional. My heart ached for her, and for him.

Contrast her with a young woman who had little self-confidence when she first married. Then her husband found so much to praise in her that she gradually began to believe she was a good person and that her opinions mattered. His belief in her rekindled her innate self-worth.

The "wolf" of excessive individualism

The third wolf is the excessive individualism that has spawned today's contractual attitudes. A seven-year-old girl came home from school crying, "Mom, don't I belong to you? Our teacher said today that nobody *belongs* to anybody—children don't belong to parents, husbands don't belong to wives. I am *yours*, aren't I, Mom?" Her mother held her close and whispered, "Of course you're mine—and I'm yours too." Surely marriage partners must respect one another's individual identity, and family members are neither slaves nor inanimate objects. But this teacher's fear, shared today by many, is that the bonds of kinship and marriage are not valuable ties that bind, but are, instead, sheer bondage. Ours is the age of the waning of belonging.

The adversary has long cultivated this overemphasis on personal autonomy, and now he feverishly exploits it. Our deepest God-given instinct is to run to the arms of those who need us and sustain us. But he drives us away from each other today with wedges of distrust and suspicion. He exaggerates the need for having space, getting out, and being left alone. Some people believe him—and then they wonder why they feel left alone. And despite admirable exceptions, children in America's growing number of single-parent families are far more at risk than children in two-parent families.⁸ The primary cause of today's general decline in child well-being is a remarkable "collapse of marriage."⁹

Modern questions about marriage

Many people even wonder these days what marriage is. Should we prohibit same-sex marriage? Should we make divorce more difficult to obtain? Some say these questions are not society's business because marriage is a private contract.¹⁰ But as the modern prophets recently proclaimed, "marriage . . . is ordained of God."¹¹ Even secular marriage was historically a three-party covenant among a man, a woman, and the state. Society has a huge interest in the outcome and the offspring of every marriage. So the public nature of marriage distinguishes it from all other relationships. Guests come to weddings, wrote Wendell Berry, because sweethearts "say their vows to the community as much as to one another," giving themselves not only to each other, but also to the common good "as no *contract* could ever join them."¹²

Observing covenants brings strength

When we observe the covenants we make at the altar of sacrifice, we discover hidden reservoirs of strength. I once said in exasperation to my wife, Marie, "The

Lord placed Adam and Eve on the earth as full-grown people. Why couldn't he have done that with this boy of ours, the one with the freckles and the unruly hair?" She replied, "The Lord gave us that child to make Christians out of us."

One night Marie exhausted herself for hours encouraging that child to finish a school assignment to build his own diorama of a Native American village on a cookie sheet. It was a test no hireling would have endured. At first he fought her efforts, but by bedtime, I saw him lay "his" diorama proudly on a counter. He started for his bed, then turned around, raced back across the room, and hugged his mother, grinning with his fourth-grade teeth. Later I asked Marie in complete awe, "How did you do it?" She said, "I just made up my mind that I couldn't leave him, no matter what." Then she added, "*I didn't know I had it in me.*" She discovered deep, internal wellsprings of compassion because the bonds of her covenants gave her strength to lay down her life for her sheep, even an hour at a time.

Be as shepherds, not hirelings

Now I return to Tom and Tracy, who this year discovered wellsprings of their own. Their second baby threatened to come too early to live. They might have made a hireling's convenient choice and gone on with their lives, letting a miscarriage occur. But because they tried to observe their covenants by sacrifice,¹³ active, energetic Tracy lay almost motionless at home for five weeks, then in a hospital bed for another five. Tom was with her virtually every hour when he was not working or sleeping. They prayed their child to earth. Then the baby required 11 more weeks in the hospital. But she is here, and she is theirs.

One night as Tracy waited patiently upon the Lord in the hospital, she sensed that perhaps her willingness to sacrifice

herself for her baby was in some small way like the Good Shepherd's sacrifice for her. She said, "I had expected that trying to give so much would be really difficult, but somehow this felt more like a privilege." As many other parents in Zion have done, she and Tom gave their hearts to God by giving them to their child. In the process they learned that theirs is a covenant marriage, one that binds them to each other and to the Lord.

May we restore the concept of marriage as a covenant, even the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.¹⁴ And when the wolf comes, may we be as shepherds, not hirelings, willing to lay down our lives, a day at a time, for the sheep of our covenant. Then, like Adam and Eve, we will have joy.¹⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 10:12-15.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 2.
3. 2 Nephi 2:23.
4. See Moses 4:23.
5. See Moses 5:11.
6. Alma 28:8.
7. See Moses 5:27.
8. See Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, 47.
9. Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage* (1996), 4.
10. See Bruce Dunford, "Governor: Take State Out of Marriage Role," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 Jan. 1996, p. A5; "Family Cannot Be Forced," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 Jan. 1996, p. A10.
11. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (1993), 125, 137-39; italics added.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:25.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God,

for a Prophet." Elder Quentin L. Cook, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Quentin L. Cook

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is my first opportunity to address you since the call to this new assignment. There is no way to express either the sense of responsibility or the feelings of inadequacy that I have experienced, but I want you to know how grateful I am for the privilege of serving the Lord.

Rejoice in the plan of salvation

The chorus of one of my favorite hymns entreats: "Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!" ("Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66). The text of the hymn is taken from Paul's writings to the Philipians: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). The dictionary defines *rejoice* as "to feel joy or great delight" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., "rejoice," 986).

The source of the kind of joy which causes us to rejoice is an understanding of the plan of salvation. The Savior, in the Gospel of John, was approaching the closing hours of His mortal life when He would take upon Himself the sins of the world. As He prepared His disciples for what He knew was to come, He told them, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me" (John 16:16). They were not yet ready to comprehend the Resurrection. Instead the Savior explained in gentle terms that He would leave and re-

turn and told them what they would feel: sorrow at His leaving, "but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Just as the Savior's death brought sorrow, the vicissitudes of life—like death, disease, poverty, and injury—can and often will bring unhappiness. Separation from those we love invariably brings sorrow and mourning. Life is not easy, and it would be improper to diminish in any way the trials and tribulations that most experience.

That having been said, the Resurrection and Atonement wrought by the Savior and the promise of eternal life with our loved ones are of such overwhelming significance that to not rejoice would demonstrate a lack of understanding of the Savior's gift.

How to obtain joy

Joy comes when we have the Spirit in our lives (see Alma 22:15). When we have the Spirit, we rejoice in what the Savior has done for us.

What do we need to do to have this kind of joy? In addition to attaining saving ordinances and following the living prophet, we need to live in accordance with certain fundamental spiritual principles, such as prayer, scripture study, righteous living, and service to others. It is well understood that if we engage in sinful conduct, we must repent. Let

me suggest three other areas or distractions we need to avoid in order to maintain joy and rejoice more fully in the Savior's gift: (1) avoid distractions which keep us from doing what we ought to do, (2) avoid the magnification of small imperfections, and (3) avoid unfavorable comparisons with others.

Avoid "Saturday morning cartoons"

We are often unaware of the distractions which push us in a material direction and keep us from a Christ-centered focus. In essence we let celestial goals get sidetracked by telestial distractions. In our family we call these telestial distractions "Saturday morning cartoons." Let me explain.

When our children were small, my wife, Mary, and I decided to follow a tradition which my father taught when I was a child. He would meet with us individually to help us set goals in various aspects of our lives and then teach us how Church, school, and extracurricular activities would help us achieve those goals. He had three rules:

1. We needed to have worthwhile goals.
2. We could change our goals at any time.
3. Whatever goal we chose, we had to diligently work toward it.

Having been the beneficiary of this tradition, I had the desire to engage in this practice with my children. When our son, Larry, was five years old, I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said he wanted to be a doctor like his Uncle Joe. Larry had experienced a serious operation and had acquired great respect for doctors, especially his Uncle Joe. I proceeded to tell Larry how all the worthwhile things he was doing would help prepare him to be a doctor.

Several months later I asked him again what he would like to be. This time he said he wanted to be an airline pilot. Changing the goal was fine, so I pro-

ceeded to explain how his various activities would help him achieve this goal. Almost as an afterthought I said, "Larry, last time we talked you wanted to be a doctor. What has changed your mind?" He answered, "I still like the idea of being a doctor, but I have noticed that Uncle Joe works on Saturday mornings, and I wouldn't want to miss Saturday morning cartoons."

Since that time our family has labeled a distraction from a worthwhile goal as a Saturday morning cartoon.

What are some of the Saturday morning cartoons that distract us from attaining the joy that we desire? Some want to be married in the temple but date only those who do not qualify for a recommend. Others want to be a good home teacher or visiting teacher but are distracted by the constant parade of TV programs, catalogs, and other material maintenance and don't find time to minister to those they are assigned to teach. Still others want to have family prayer but allow little matters to build into discord that make it harder for the family to kneel together. If we examine the reasons we don't do what we ought to do, we find that the list of Saturday morning cartoons is almost endless.

Speaking of those who will not inherit a kingdom of glory, the Lord said, "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift" (D&C 88:33). The greatest gift to all mankind is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If we are to rejoice in this gift, we need to avoid the Saturday morning cartoons of life which distract our focus from the Savior and the celestial goal for which we strive.

Avoid magnifying small imperfections

A second group who do not find joy are distracted by magnifying small areas

of imperfection so as to drive out happiness. Some have allowed their own perceptions of imperfection to cloud the reality of their lives. An objective outsider observing them would conclude that they should be joyful. But they do not feel to rejoice. They are like the couple who have been invited to visit a beautiful garden. Instead of celebrating the visual feast, they see only the few wilted flowers and weeds and the relatively small areas which are not beautiful to behold. They do not feel the garden meets their expectations. In like manner they are unduly critical of themselves and of others. They have become accustomed to exaggerating small imperfections and underestimating great blessings and have lost the capacity to rejoice.

The Savior in Luke mildly cautioned Martha about this approach when she complained that her sister Mary was spending too much time listening to the Savior instead of serving temporal needs. He said, "Martha, Martha, thou art . . . troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). The Savior then indicated that Mary was focused on what really mattered.

Avoid comparing talents and blessings

A third area of distraction that can destroy joy is comparing our talents and blessings with others. The growth in our own talents is the best measure of personal progress. In recent years the concept of "personal best" has become widely accepted. This has great merit. Remember we usually judge others at their best and ourselves at our worst. In the parable of the talents, the servants who received five talents and two talents were praised by their lord for increasing their talents and told to "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The servant who was rebuked was the servant who buried the talent given him. (See Matthew 25:14-30.) Comparing blessings is almost

certain to drive out joy. We cannot be grateful and envious at the same time. If we truly want to have the Spirit of the Lord and experience joy and happiness, we should rejoice in our blessings and be grateful. We should especially rejoice in the blessings that are available through the temple.

Rejoice in the promise of the Atonement

On April 3, 1836, the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were engaged in sacred spiritual worship in the Kirtland Temple. After a solemn and silent prayer, the Lord appeared to them and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house.

The marvelous description of the Savior and the appearance of ancient prophets who restored essential keys make the 110th section of the Doctrine and Covenants one of the most sacred and profound of all the communications the Lord has given us.

Some of the most beautiful words in this section, or that any of us could ever hope to hear, are contained in verses 5 and 6:

"Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.

"Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name."

Brothers and sisters, let us avoid the Saturday morning cartoons of life, particularly those that would keep us from the temple. Let us rejoice in the promise that is ours through the Atonement of the Savior and through Christlike living adhere to the counsel of the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). That each of us may do this is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Faithful home teachers and visiting teachers

The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us. He always keeps His promises offered through His authorized servants, but it is the crucial test of our lives to see if we will make and keep our covenants with Him.

I saw again the power of keeping covenants through a chance conversation with a man I sat down next to on a trip. I had never met him before, but apparently he had seen me in the crowd because his first words after I introduced myself were, "I've been watching you." He told me about his work. I told him about mine. He asked about my family, and then he told me something about his. He said that his wife was a member of the Church and that he was not.

After he came to trust me, he said something like this: "You know, there is something in your church you should fix. You need to tell your people when to quit." He explained that he and his wife had been married for 25 years. She had been a member of the Church since childhood. In their years of marriage she had only once stepped into a building of the Church, and that was to tour a temple before its dedication, and then only because her parents had arranged it.

Then he told me why he thought we ought to make a change. He said that in those 25 years of married life, in which his wife showed no interest in the Church,

visiting teachers and home teachers had never stopped coming to their home. He told of one evening when he went out to walk his dog alone only to find the home teacher happening by with his dog, eager to visit with him.

He told, with a touch of exasperation, of another night when he came home from a long business trip, put his car in the garage, and then came out to find his home teachers standing there, smiling. He said to me something like, "And there they were, right in my face with another plate of cookies."

I think I understood his feelings. And then I tried, as best I could, to tell him how hard it would be to teach such teachers to quit. I told him that the love that he had felt from those many visitors and their constancy over the years in the face of little response came from a covenant they had made with God. I told him about the baptismal covenant as Alma described it in the Book of Mormon. I didn't quote these words, but you will remember them as Alma asked those he had taught whether they wished to be baptized:

"And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye

may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Our covenant to witness and to love

Those home teachers and visiting teachers understood and believed that the covenant to be a witness and to love were intertwined and that they reinforced each other. There is no other way to explain what had happened. My new friend recognized that the visitors had genuine concern for him and for his wife. And he knew their caring sprang from a belief that impelled them to come back. He seemed, at least to me, to understand that those visitors were driven from within by a covenant they would not break.

As we parted, I think he knew why he could expect that there would be more visits, more evidence of caring, and more patient waiting for the opportunity to bear testimony of the restored gospel. As we parted, I realized that I had learned something too. I will never again see home teaching or visiting teaching as only programs of the Church. Those faithful teachers saw what they were doing for what it really was. Such work is an opportunity, not a burden. Every member has made the covenant in the waters of baptism to be a witness for God. Every member has made a covenant to do works of kindness as the Savior would do. So any call to bear witness and to care for others is not a request for extra service; it is a blessing designed by a loving Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They have provided such calls as well as other settings, sometimes without a formal call, all for the same purpose. Each is a chance to prove what blessings flow from being a covenant people, and each is an opportunity for which you agreed to be accountable. Each is a sacred responsibility for others accepted in the waters of baptism but

too often not met because it may not be recognized for what it is.

Keep covenants in families

The power of that covenant to love and to witness should transform what members do in other settings across the world. One of the most important is in the family. Prophets in our time have consolidated our meetings on Sunday to allow time for families to be together. The prophets have also been inspired to help us reserve Monday night for family home evenings. Those opportunities require choices. In thousands of homes the choices made are guided by the covenant to comfort those that stand in need of comfort and to stand as witnesses of God.

Both the consolidation of the Sunday meetings and the creation of a family home evening are to provide opportunity for families to have time together to give Christlike service and to study the scriptures and gospel principles. The power of that possibility was taught by President Spencer W. Kimball this way:

"I wonder what this world would be like if every father and mother gathered their children around them at least once a week, explained the gospel, and bore fervent testimonies to them. How could immorality continue and infidelity break families and delinquency spawn?" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 345).

There are in those hours on Sunday and in a family home evening on Monday the opportunity to combine genuine caring, teaching the gospel, and the bearing of testimony. Across the earth there are families who love and understand their covenants who do that. From my front window I have seen parents, their children at their sides, move down the street to the home of a neighbor to offer comfort, to give Christlike service. I wasn't there to see it, but surely the warmth of those moments lingered later at home

when a song of Zion was sung, a prayer given that likely included a plea for the person visited, a scripture read, a short lesson taught, and testimonies of the restored gospel borne.

There is a caution I would give and a promise I would offer about such choices of how to use family time. For a person not yet a member of the Church, to fail to provide such moments of love and faith is simply a lost opportunity. But for those under covenant, it is much more. There are few places where the covenant to love and to bear witness is more easily kept than in the home. And there are few places where it can matter more for those for whom we are accountable. For members of the Church, my caution is that to neglect those opportunities is a choice not to keep sacred covenants.

Because God always honors covenants, I can make a promise to those who in faith keep the covenant to create experiences of giving love and bearing testimony with their families. They will reap a harvest of hearts touched, faith in Jesus Christ exercised unto repentance, and the desire and the power to keep covenants strengthened.

Keep covenants by sharing the gospel

There is another circumstance in which the covenant to combine kindness with bearing witness has great power to change lives. Thousands of times every day, members of the Church are watched, as I was by the man I met on a trip, by people curious to know something about our lives. Because we are under covenant to be witnesses, we will try to tell them how the gospel has brought us happiness. What they think of what we say may depend largely on how much they sense we care for them.

That was true when King Lamoni met Ammon, as we have it described in the Book of Mormon. Ammon had been captured by guards and brought to the king, who could take his life. But appar-

ently within minutes King Lamoni recognized that Ammon cared enough for him to want to serve him. Ammon said, when offered high station, "Nay, but I will be thy servant" (Alma 17:25; see also verses 20-24). Within days the king knew that Ammon was willing to risk his life for him. And then came the opportunity for Ammon to be a witness of God to the king.

Those we meet will feel the love that springs from our long practice in keeping a covenant to "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9). It may not be in hours or days as it was for King Lamoni, but they will feel our love after testing our hearts. And when they find our concern sincere, the Holy Spirit can more easily touch them to allow us to teach and to testify, as it did for Ammon.

Again I have a caution and a promise. The caution is that sorrow will come from failure either to love or to bear witness. If we fail to feel and show honest concern for those we approach with the gospel, they will reasonably distrust our message. But if out of fear of rejection we fail to tell them what the gospel has meant in our lives and could mean in theirs, we will someday share their sorrow. Either in this life or in the life to come, they will know that we failed to share with them the priceless gift of the gospel. They will know that accepting the gospel was the only way for them to inherit eternal life. And they will know that we received the gospel with a promise that we would share it.

I can make two promises to those who offer the gospel to others. The first is that even those who reject it will someday thank us. More than once I have asked missionaries to visit friends far from where I lived, learned that the missionaries had been rejected, and then received a letter from my friend with words like this: "I was honored that you would

offer to me something that I knew meant so much to you." If not in this life, such messages will be sent to us in the world to come when those we approached will know the truth and how much we cared for them. My second promise is that as you offer the gospel to others, it will go down more deeply into your own heart. It becomes the well of water springing up into eternal life for us as we offer it to others.

Keep covenants by living law of the fast

There is one other setting which provides a near-perfect opportunity to combine love and testimony. In every ward and branch in the Church, once a month we hold a fast and testimony meeting. We fast for two meals. With the money saved, and adding more to it whenever we can, we pay a generous fast offering. The bishop and the branch president use those offerings, under inspiration, to care for the poor and the needy. Thus, by paying a fast offering we give comfort to those in need of comfort as we promised that we would.

The fast also helps us to feel humble and meek so that the Holy Ghost may more easily be our companion. By our fast, we both keep our covenant to care for others and we prepare to keep our covenant to bear testimony.

Those who have prepared carefully for the fast and testimony meeting won't need to be reminded how to bear testimony should they feel impressed to do it in the meeting. They won't give sermons or exhortations or travel reports or try to entertain as they bear witness. Because they will have already expressed appreciation to people privately, they will have less need to do it publicly. Neither will they feel a need to use eloquent language nor to go on at length.

A testimony is a simple expression of what we feel. The member who has fasted both for the blessing of the poor and for the companionship of the Spirit

will be feeling gratitude for the love of God and the certainty of eternal truth. Even a child can feel such things, which may be why sometimes the testimony of a child so moves us and why our preparation of fasting and prayer produces in us childlike feelings.

That preparation for the fast and testimony meeting is a covenant obligation for members of the Church. The offering of the gospel to those we meet and to our families are covenant obligations. We can take heart that our honest effort to keep our covenants allows God to increase our power to do it. We all need that assurance at times when our promise to love and to witness seems hard for us.

Blessings of keeping covenants

The fruit of keeping covenants is the companionship of the Holy Ghost and an increase in the power to love. That happens because of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change our very natures. We are eyewitnesses of that miracle of greater spiritual power coming to those who accept covenants and keep commandments. For instance, there are families across the Church who read and reread letters from their missionary children with wonder, and a few tears, at the miracle that in so short a time they have become new, better people.

Yet I have also seen that same miracle in a mature man and woman, called to serve as proselyting missionary companions in the most difficult of circumstances which would have taxed the bravest youth. As the husband made his report, I thought back to the man I had known. I realized that the promised miracle of spiritual growth is not a product of youth but of the faith simply to try to keep covenants. That couple went out to love the people and to bear witness, and they returned transformed as much as any 21-year-old.

God will help us keep covenants

Each of us who has made covenants with God faces challenges unique to us. But each of us shares some common assurances. Our Heavenly Father knows us and our circumstances and even what faces us in the future. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, has suffered and paid for our sins and those of all the people we will ever meet. He has perfect understanding of the feelings, the suffering, the trials, and the needs of every individual. Because of that, a way will be prepared for us to keep our covenants, however difficult that may now appear, if we go forward in faith.

I share with you the obligation to be a witness for God at all times and in all places that I will be in as long as I live. And I share with you the confidence that God can grant us the power to keep all our covenants.

I am grateful that I know as surely as did the Apostles Peter, James, and John that Jesus is the Christ, our risen Lord, and that he is our advocate with the Father. I know that the Father bore di-

rect witness of His Beloved Son by introducing the resurrected Lord to the boy Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated by the Prophet Joseph through the power of God. I know that the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored by those who received them from the Savior and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is now the only person on earth authorized to direct the use of all those keys. I bear solemn testimony that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ, in which the ordinances and the covenants are offered, which if accepted and honored produce peace in this life and assure us eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Humbly I join the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, who asked, "Why not speak of the atonement of Christ?"¹ This topic comprises our third article of faith: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

Before we can comprehend the Atonement of Christ, however, we must first understand the Fall of Adam. And before we can understand the Fall of Adam, we must first understand the Creation. These three crucial components of the plan of salvation relate to each other.²

The Creation

The Creation culminated with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were created in the image of God, with bodies of flesh and bone.³ Created in the image of God and not yet mortal, they could not grow old and die.⁴ "And they would have had no children"⁵ nor experienced the trials of life. (Please forgive me for mentioning children and the trials of life in the same breath.) The creation of Adam and Eve was a *paradisiacal creation*, one that required a significant change before they could fulfill the commandment to have children⁶ and thus

provide earthly bodies for premortal spirit sons and daughters of God.

The Fall

That brings us to the Fall. Scripture teaches that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”⁷ The Fall of Adam (and Eve) constituted the *mortal creation* and brought about the required changes in their bodies, including the circulation of blood and other modifications as well.⁸ They were now able to have children. They and their posterity also became subject to injury, disease, and death. And a loving Creator blessed them with healing power by which the life and function of precious physical bodies could be preserved. For example, bones, if broken, could become solid again. Lacerations of the flesh could heal themselves. And miraculously, leaks in the circulation could be sealed off by components activated from the very blood being lost.⁹

Think of the wonder of that power to heal! If you could create anything that could repair itself, you would have created life in perpetuity. For example, if you could create a chair that could fix its own broken leg, there would be no limit to the life of that chair. Many of you walk on legs that were once broken and do so because of your remarkable gift of healing.

Even though our Creator endowed us with this incredible power, He consigned a counterbalancing gift to our bodies. It is the blessing of *aging*, with visible reminders that we are mortal beings destined one day to leave this “frail existence.”¹⁰ Our bodies change every day. As we grow older, our broad chests and narrow waists have a tendency to trade places. We get wrinkles, lose color in our hair—even the hair itself—to remind us that we are mortal children of God, with a “manufacturer’s guarantee” that we shall not be stranded upon the

earth forever. Were it not for the Fall, our physicians, beauticians, and morticians would all be unemployed.

Adam and Eve, as mortal beings, were instructed to “worship the Lord their God, and . . . offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord.”¹¹ They were further instructed that “the life of the flesh is in the blood: . . . for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”¹² Probation, procreation, and aging were all components of—and physical death was essential to—God’s “great plan of happiness.”¹³

But mortal life, glorious as it is, was never the *ultimate* objective of God’s plan. Life and death here on planet Earth were merely *means* to an end—not the *end* for which we were sent.

The Atonement

That brings us to the Atonement. Paul said, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”¹⁴ The Atonement of Jesus Christ became the *immortal creation*. He volunteered to answer the ends of a law previously transgressed.¹⁵ And by the shedding of His blood, His¹⁶ and our physical bodies could become perfected. They could again function without blood, just as Adam’s and Eve’s did in their *paradisiacal* form. Paul taught that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; . . . this mortal must put on immortality.”¹⁷

Meaning of atonement

With this background in mind, let us now ponder the deep meaning of the word *atonement*. In the English language, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages¹⁸ employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. *Expiation* means “to atone for.” *Reconciliation* comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning “again”; *con*, meaning “with”;

and *sella*, meaning "seat." *Reconciliation*, therefore, literally means "to sit again with."

Rich meaning is found in study of the word *atonement* in the Semitic languages of Old Testament times. In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means "to cover" or "to forgive."¹⁹ Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning "a close embrace," no doubt related to the Egyptian ritual embrace. References to that embrace are evident in the Book of Mormon. One states that "the Lord hath redeemed my soul . . . ; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love."²⁰ Another proffers the glorious hope of our being "clasped in the arms of Jesus."²¹

I weep for joy when I contemplate the significance of it all. To be redeemed is to be atoned—received in the close embrace of God with an expression not only of His forgiveness but of our oneness of heart and mind. What a privilege! And what a comfort to those of us with loved ones who have already passed from our family circle through the gateway we call death!

Scriptures teach us more about the word *atonement*. The Old Testament has many references to *atonement*, which called for animal sacrifice. Not any animal would do. Special considerations included:

- The selection of a firstling of the flock, without blemish.²²
- The sacrifice of the animal's life by the shedding of its blood.²³
- Death of the animal without breaking a bone.²⁴
- One animal could be sacrificed as a vicarious act for another.²⁵

The Atonement of Christ fulfilled these prototypes of the Old Testament. He was the firstborn Lamb of God, without blemish. His sacrifice occurred by the shedding of blood. No bones of His body were broken—noteworthy in that

both malefactors crucified with the Lord had their legs broken.²⁶ And His was a vicarious sacrifice for others.

While the words *atone* or *atonement*, in any of their forms, appear only once in the King James translation of the New Testament,²⁷ they appear 35 times in the Book of Mormon.²⁸ As another testament of Jesus Christ, it sheds precious light on His Atonement, as do the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Latter-day revelation has added much to our biblical base of understanding.

Infinite atonement

In preparatory times of the Old Testament, the practice of atonement was finite, meaning it had an end. It was a symbolic forecast of the definitive Atonement of Jesus the Christ. His Atonement is infinite—without an end.²⁹ It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all.³⁰ And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him.³¹ It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension.

Jesus was the only one who could offer such an infinite atonement, since He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. Because of that unique birthright, Jesus was an infinite Being.

The ordeal of the Atonement

The ordeal of the Atonement centered about the city of Jerusalem. There the greatest single act of love of all recorded history took place.³² Leaving the upper room, Jesus and His friends crossed

the deep ravine east of the city and came to a garden of olive trees on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. There in the garden bearing the Hebrew name of *Gethsemane*—meaning “oil press”—olives had been beaten and pressed to provide oil and food. There at Gethsemane, the Lord “suffered the pain of all men, that all . . . might repent and come unto him.”³³ He took upon Himself the weight of the sins of all mankind, bearing its massive load that caused Him to bleed from every pore.³⁴

Later He was beaten and scourged. A crown of sharp thorns was thrust upon His head as an additional form of torture.³⁵ He was mocked and jeered. He suffered every indignity at the hands of His own people. “I came unto my own,” He said, “and my own received me not.”³⁶ Instead of their warm embrace, He received their cruel rejection. Then He was required to carry His own cross to the hill of Calvary, where He was nailed to that cross and made to suffer excruciating pain.

Later He said, “I thirst.”³⁷ To a doctor of medicine, this is a very meaningful expression. Doctors know that when a patient goes into shock because of blood loss, invariably that patient—if still conscious—with parched and shriveled lips cries for water.

Even though the Father and the Son knew well in advance what was to be experienced, the actuality of it brought indescribable agony. “And [Jesus] said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”³⁸ Jesus then complied with the will of His Father.³⁹ Three days later, precisely as prophesied, He rose from the grave. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. He had accomplished the Atonement, which could give immortality and eternal life to all obedient human beings. All that the Fall allowed to go awry, the Atonement allowed to go aright.

The Savior’s gift of *immortality* comes to all who have ever lived. But His gift of *eternal life* requires repentance and obedience to specific ordinances and covenants. Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer. Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews our memory of the Savior’s broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life—the greatest gift of God to man⁴⁰—the “object and end of our existence.”⁴¹

The Atonement enabled the purpose of the Creation to be accomplished

The Creation required the Fall. The Fall required the Atonement. The Atonement enabled the purpose of the Creation to be accomplished. Eternal life, made possible by the Atonement, is the supreme purpose of the Creation. To phrase that statement in its negative form, if families were not sealed in holy temples, the whole earth would be utterly wasted.⁴²

The purposes of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement all converge on the sacred work done in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The earth was created and the Church was restored to make possible the sealing of wife to husband, children to parents, families to progenitors, worlds without end.

This is the great latter-day work of which we are a part. That is why we have missionaries; that is why we have temples—to bring the fullest blessings of the Atonement to faithful children of God. That is why we respond to our own calls from the Lord. When we comprehend His voluntary Atonement, any sense of

sacrifice on our part becomes completely overshadowed by a profound sense of gratitude for the privilege of serving Him.

As one of the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,"⁴³ I testify that He is the Son of the living God. Jesus is the Christ—our atoning Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church, restored to bless God's children and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 4:12.
2. The relationships of these components are found linked together in several scriptures, such as Alma 18:34–39; Mormon 9:12; Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–25.
3. They were created as *amortal* beings—"without mortality"—not at that time subject to death.
4. See Alma 12:21–23.
5. 2 Nephi 2:23.
6. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28.
7. 2 Nephi 2:25.
8. We should remember that God forgave Adam and Eve their transgression (see Moses 6:53).
9. Such as platelets and thrombin.
10. "O My Father," *Hymns*, no. 292.
11. Moses 5:5.
12. Leviticus 17:11.
13. Alma 42:8.
14. 1 Corinthians 15:22; see also Mosiah 16:7–8.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:7; see also "Behold the Great Redeemer Die," *Hymns*, no. 191.
16. See Luke 13:32.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:50–53.
18. Such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German.
19. We might even surmise that if an individual qualifies for the blessings of the Atonement (through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel), Jesus will "cover" our past transgressions from the Father.
20. 2 Nephi 1:15.
21. Mormon 5:11; additional examples are in Alma 5:33; 34:16.
22. See Leviticus 5:18; 27:26.
23. See Leviticus 9:18.
24. See Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12.
25. See Leviticus 16:10.
26. See John 19:31–33.
27. See Romans 5:11.
28. *Atonement* = 24; plus *atone*, *atoning*, or *atoned* = 8; plus *atoneth* = 3; total 35 times.
29. See 2 Nephi 9:7; 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14.
30. See Hebrews 10:10.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; Moses 1:33.
32. See John 3:16.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
34. See Luke 22:44; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
35. See Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5.
36. 3 Nephi 9:16; see also Doctrine and Covenants 6:21; 10:57; 11:29; 39:3; 45:8; 133:66.
37. John 19:28.
38. Mark 14:36. The word *Abba* is significant. *Ab* means "father"; *Abba* is an endearing and tender form of that term. The nearest English equivalent might be *Daddy*.
39. Centuries later, the Lord shared innermost recollections of this experience with the Prophet Joseph Smith, the record of which we read in Doctrine and Covenants 19.
40. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
41. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (1978), 568.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:3; 138:48.
43. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.

President Faust

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will con-

vene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express gratitude to the Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy

and Draper, Utah, for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will sing in closing "Beautiful Savior." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder L. Edward Brown offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 5, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men's choir from the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. Brother Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Brother John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood meeting. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

Elders Henry B. Eyring, Monte J. Brough, and L. Lionel Kendrick are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. F. Burton Howard, Merrill J. Bateman, John K. Carmack, and Claudio R. M. Costa are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Marlin K. Jensen and Ben B. Banks are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce, for the information of those who were not here today in the earlier sessions, that Elder Carlos E. Asay was given emeritus status and released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Elders W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro were honorably released from their service as Seventies after having done a great work. Elder Earl C. Tingey was sustained as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld was released as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency. Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone was released as second counselor; he was then sustained as first counselor in the Young Men presidency. And Elder F. David Stanley was sustained as second counselor in the Young Men presidency.

We are favored tonight with the presence of this great missionary chorus. Look at them—all of their badges on and their faces washed, shining there like angels in black armor. They will provide the music for this evening's meeting, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ. I should say they've come up from the Missionary Training Center.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Called to Serve," following which Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Seventy will offer the benediction. I've got the meeting dismissed already! It's the invocation. Somebody may say, "Well, I wish!"

The choir sang "Called to Serve."
Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Uchtdorf.

The choir will now favor us with "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," and Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder L. Tom Perry

The revelation of the Word of Wisdom

The early history of the Church records that during the winter of 1832-33, the Lord directed that a school of the prophets was to be organized "for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them" (D&C 88:127). It was to be held on the second floor of the Newel K. Whitney store. The brethren would come to the school to be instructed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Some had acquired the habit of chewing and smoking tobacco. It became difficult for the Prophet to teach spiritual things in a temporal environment filled with smoke. Joseph Smith was troubled with the physical surroundings and inquired of the Lord if such conditions were proper for the brethren. In answer to his petition, he received a revelation known to us as the Word of Wisdom.

The Word of Wisdom contains some very positive aspects. It encourages us to use grains, particularly wheat, and to use fruits and vegetables and the sparing use of meat. It is also noted for its prohibition—absolute prohibition—against the use of alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. Added to this has been the counsel of the Church leaders to abstain from the use of such drugs as marijuana, cocaine,

et cetera, and the abusive use of prescription drugs.

In a special promise that was given in this revelation as contained in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we receive these words:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:18-21).

Creed Haymond obeys the Word of Wisdom

I will ever be grateful for the teachings of righteous parents who instilled in us the lessons taught to us in the Word of Wisdom. In addition to their teachings, we were taught carefully by Primary, Sunday School, and priesthood teachers.

I particularly remember a Primary teacher reading a story to us from the

Improvement Era. I had the Historical Department find it for me, and I found it was worth repeating. The story was taken from the October 1928 *Improvement Era* and is about Creed Haymond, a young Mormon who applied and was accepted at the University of Pennsylvania. He was an athlete known for his speed, and because of the way he acted and participated, he was chosen to be the captain of the track team.

The annual meet of the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America was held at Harvard Stadium at the end of May of 1919. To Cambridge came the greatest college athletes—1,700 in all. In the tryouts, Penn had qualified 17 men. Cornell, their most feared rival that year, had qualified only 10. The Penn team was in position to be crowned the champions. The scores were made on the first five places—five for first, four for second, three for third, two for fourth, and one for fifth. Naturally, the team that qualified the most men had the greatest opportunity to win the meet.

The Penn coach was in high spirits the night before the meet. He made the rounds of his team members before he retired. He came into Creed's room and said, "Creed, if we do our best tomorrow, we will run away with it."

The coach hesitated. "Creed, I'm having the boys take a little sherry wine tonight. I want you to have some, just a little of course."

"I won't do it, Coach."

"But, Creed, I'm not going to get you drunk. I know what you 'Mormons' believe. I'm giving you this as a tonic, just to put you all on your metal."

"It won't do me any good, Coach; I can't take it."

The coach replied, "Remember, Creed, you're the captain of the team and our best point winner. Fourteen thousand students are looking to you personally to win this meet. If you fail

us, we'll lose. I ought to know what is good for you."

Creed knew that other coaches felt that a little wine was useful when men have trained muscles and nerves almost to the snapping point. He knew also that what the coach was asking him to do was against all that he had been taught from his early childhood. He looked his coach in the eye and said, "I won't take it."

The coach replied, "You're a funny fellow, Creed. You won't take tea at the training table. You have ideas of your own. Well, I'm going to let you do as you please."

The coach then left the captain of the team in a state of extreme anxiety. Suppose he made a poor showing tomorrow. What could he say to his coach? He was going up against the fastest men in the world. Nothing less than his best would do. His stubbornness might lose the meet for Penn. His teammates were told what to do, and they had responded. They believed in their coach. What right did he have to disobey? There was only one reason. He had been taught all his life to obey the Word of Wisdom.

It was a critical hour in this young man's life. With all the spiritual forces of his nature pressing in on him, he knelt down and earnestly asked the Lord to give him a testimony as to the source of this revelation that he had believed in and obeyed. Then he went to his bed and slept in sound slumber.

Creed Haymond wins his races

The next morning the coach came into his room and asked, "How are you feeling, Creed?"

"Fine," the captain answered cheerfully.

"All of the other fellows are ill. I don't know what's the matter with them," the coach said seriously.

"Maybe it's the tonic you gave them, Coach."

"Maybe so," answered the coach.

Two o'clock found 20,000 spectators in their seats waiting for the meet to begin. As the events got under way, it was plain that something was wrong with the wonderful Penn team. Event after event, the Penn team performed well below what was expected of them. Some members were even too ill to participate.

The 100- and 220-yard dash were Creed's races. The Penn team desperately needed him to win for them. He was up against the five fastest men in American colleges. As the men took their marks for the 100-yard dash and the pistol was shot, every man sprang forward into the air and touched the earth at a run—that is, all except one—Creed Haymond. The runner using the second lane in the trials—the lane that Creed was running in at this particular event—had kicked a hole for his toe an inch or two behind the spot where Haymond had just chosen for his. They didn't use starting blocks in those days. With the tremendous thrust that Creed gave, the narrow wedge of earth broke through, and he came down on his knee behind the line.

He got up and tried to make up for the poor start. At 60 yards, he was last in the race. Then he seemed to fly past the fifth man, then the fourth, then the third, then the second. Close to the tape, heart bursting with strain, he swept into that climax with whirlwind swiftness and ran past the final man to victory.

Through some mistake in arrangements, the semifinals for the 220 were not completed until almost the close of the meet. With the same bad breaks that had followed the Penn team all day, Creed Haymond had been placed in the last qualifying heat for the 220-yard dash. Then, five minutes after winning it, he was called upon to start the final 220, the last event of the day. One of the other men who had run in an earlier heat rushed up to him. "Tell the starter

you demand a rest before running again. You're entitled to it under the rules. I've hardly caught my breath yet and I ran in the heat before yours."

Creed went panting to the starter and begged for more time. The official said he would give him 10 minutes. But the crowd was clamoring for the final race to begin. Regretfully he called the men to their marks. Under ordinary conditions Creed would not have feared this race. He was probably the fastest man in the world at that distance, but yet he had already run three races that afternoon—one the heart-stopping 100-yard dash.

The starter ordered the men to their marks, raised his pistol, and with a puff of smoke the race began. This time the Penn captain literally shot from his marks. Soon Creed emerged from the crowd and took the lead. He sprinted all the way up the field, and with a burst of speed and eight yards ahead of the nearest man, he broke the tape, winning the second race—the 220-yard dash.

Penn had lost the meet, but their captain had astounded the fans with his excellent runs.

At the end of that strange day, as Creed Haymond was going to bed, there suddenly came to his memory his question of the night before regarding the divinity of the Word of Wisdom. The procession of that peculiar series of events then passed before his mind—his teammates had taken wine and had failed; his abstinence had brought victories that even amazed himself. The sweet, simple assurance of the Spirit came to him: the Word of Wisdom is of God. (Adapted from Joseph J. Cannon, "Speed and the Spirit," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1928, 1001-7.)

Be an example in living the law of health

I wonder in this age if it is enough to just have the courage to say no, or do we have a further responsibility to be of ser-

vice to others in helping them overcome the great curse that is now plaguing our society? There was one time in my life that I wished that I had exerted a little more influence in preventing a friend from partaking of a harmful substance. We were on a Scout outing in Yellowstone. Late one evening we went to see Old Faithful erupt. Walking back to our tents, my friend stopped me in a dark, secluded spot and took out a can of beer. I don't know where he managed to get it. He said, "I have a treat for us"; then he offered to share the can of beer with me. Of course, my home training and teachings of great leaders in the auxiliaries and priesthood had been such that this was no temptation for me and that I was not to accept his offer. He drank the whole can, and I made no effort to dissuade or stop him. It had a harmful effect on our friendship. I really don't know why. Maybe it was because I had a sense of guilt for not being more aggressive in preventing him from partaking of the beverage. And maybe on his part, he was afraid that I would reveal what occurred in a way that it would get back to his parents. Over the years I have been saddened by the loss of that friendship.

Today the curse of drink and drugs is becoming a national nightmare. It is the cause of most of our crime, accidents, loss of employment, and the breakup of our homes. You great young men of the

Aaronic Priesthood will be required to pay the social costs for this dreaded disease as you move forward into your adult lives. Surely something must be done to stop this destructive force. I challenge you to stand up to your peers as an example of righteous living. I know the Lord will fulfill his promise to you by blessing you with health, with knowledge, with wisdom that will set you apart from the rest of the world. Your righteous example will also bless the lives of many, many others.

God bless you that you will have the courage to live the way you should and be an example of one living the great gospel principles we hold so dear is my humble prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Perry. I may say that I heard Creed Haymond tell that story personally when I was a boy. He lived in our stake. He was on the high council, and he came and told it to the Aaronic Priesthood boys of our ward. It was very impressive. He later presided over the Northern States Mission. He was a successful dentist in this community and a man of great faith.

Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Joe J. Christensen

The Savior is counting on you

A few years ago following general conference, our four-year-old grandson Andrew asked his mother, "Mommy, is Jesus counting on me?" His mother answered, "Oh yes, Andrew, Jesus *is* counting on you. He wants you to obey Mom and Dad, to do what is right, and *espe-*

cially to be kind to your little brother, Benny." This four-year-old thought about that for a few moments and said, "Mommy, tell Him *not* to count on me!"

Fortunately, by the time Andrew receives the Aaronic Priesthood, he will have come to know that Jesus *is* counting on him.

Tonight let's consider three important ways in which the Lord is counting on you who are privileged to bear the Aaronic Priesthood.

Be a champion of those who need you

First, the Savior is counting on you to be a champion of those who need you.

In a high school not far from here, a young mentally handicapped student we will call Frank wanted so much to be accepted by the popular crowd. He would follow them around, always on the outside looking in, hoping to be included but never achieving it.

One day in the cafeteria, some of the more popular boys and girls encouraged Frank to get up on the table and dance. Thinking he would please them, he did it. In his awkward way, he twisted and twirled. The group yelled, clapped their hands, and laughed. They were laughing *at* him, and Frank thought they were laughing *with* him.

A few tables away, Dave was eating lunch with a friend and watching it all. He courageously leaped up, faced that crowd of tormentors, and through clenched teeth said, "I've had as much of this as I can stand!" He helped Frank down and said, "Frank, you come and have lunch with us."

The Savior is counting on you to be a champion of those who need you, and they are all around you—in your school, in your neighborhood, in your family.

At a 20-year high school reunion, one of the graduates had a surprising conversation with one of her classmates that went something like this:

"I came to this reunion after all these years hoping you would be here so I could thank you. My high school experience was hard for me. You may not have known it, but you were the only friend I had in high school. I wondered if maybe the seminary teacher had assigned you to be nice to me. Did he?"

"No. He didn't assign me."

"Well, you didn't know it, but every day I looked for you because I knew that you would talk to me. You made me feel better about myself. Now I am married and have a large family. During these past years I have thought many times of what you meant to me, and I wanted to tell you that."

There are those who wake up every morning dreading to go to school, or even to a Church activity, because they worry about how they will be treated. You have the power to change their lives for the better. You are a bearer of the priesthood of God, and the Lord is counting on you to be a builder and give them a lift. Think less about yourself and more about the power you have to assist others, even those within your own family.

A 14-year-old sister was all dressed up to go to a Young Women activity at a time in her life when she felt very unsure about herself. She was quietly and self-consciously inching her way toward the front door, hoping not to be noticed by all the young men in the living room who were visiting with her older brother Russell. She was given a life-changing boost when her older brother interrupted his conversation and said to her in front of his friends, "My, Emily, you look pretty tonight!" A small thing? No. There are young women who claim that they would not have made it through those growing-up years without the encouragement and support of their older brothers.

Last month in the area of Salt Lake City, a fellow Aaronic Priesthood bearer, Zachary Snarr, was brutally and senselessly murdered. Among the many wonderful things said about him by family and friends was that he rarely let a day go by without telling his mother how much he loved her. His cheerful and loving nature around their home leaves them with priceless memories. Your mothers need you to be a champion of

them. Never should a bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood be guilty of saying anything discourteous or disrespectful to his mother.

The scriptures teach us that whenever we are abusive, thoughtless, or unkind to others, “the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice” (3 Nephi 9:2); also, that “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen [or the end] to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

Maybe you have thought that doing these little kindnesses doesn’t make much difference, but as Alma said, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). We also read: “Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. [You are a great work in progress.] And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

Avoid evil in the media

Next, the Savior is counting on you to avoid the immoral trash that surrounds you in the media.

Satan has made great inroads into the lives of some Latter-day Saints through the evil in the media. I am confident that the great majority of you have not been guilty of serious sexual sin, but many are placing themselves in a path that could lead to it. A bishop reported that he had observed that the spiritual level of the young priesthood bearers in his ward was declining. Through his personal interviews with them, he discovered that many of them were watching R-rated movies. When he asked them where they went to see such trash, they said, “We don’t go anywhere. We watch them at home. We have cable television, and when our parents are gone we watch anything we want to.”

Fathers, you may want to reconsider having unrestricted cable or unsuper-

vised television sets in your home and particularly in your children’s bedrooms.

It is very unreasonable to suppose that exposure to profanity, nudity, sex, and violence has no negative effects on us. We can’t roll around in the mud without getting dirty.

It is a concern that some of our young Latter-day Saints, as well as their parents, regularly watch R-rated and other inappropriate movies and videos—one more reason why the “devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice” (3 Nephi 9:2).

Just a few months ago the Lord’s prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, shared with the youth, and with all of us, this clear and unmistakable counsel:

“Be clean. I cannot emphasize that enough. Be clean. It is so very, very important, and you at your age are in such temptation all the time. It is thrown at you on television. It is thrown at you in books and magazines and videos. You do not have to rent them. Don’t do it. Just don’t do it. Don’t look at them. If somebody proposes that you sit around all night watching some of that sleazy stuff, you say, ‘It’s not for me.’ Stay away from it” (Denver, Colorado, youth meeting, 14 Apr. 1996).

The Lord and His living prophets are counting on you to avoid the trash that surrounds you in the media. When anyone chooses to ignore or defiantly go against the counsel of the living prophet, he is on very shaky ground.

Remember that when Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife to be immoral with her, he “fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12).

Temptations are all around us, and today with the advent of the Internet, they are increasing. There is much that is positive in the world of the media, but there is so much that is negative. If we permit ourselves to become involved with the negative, there will be much more cause for the devil to laugh and his angels to rejoice.

Be worthy to enter the temple and serve missions

Finally, the Savior is counting on you to be worthy to enter the temple and to fill an honorable mission.

An acquaintance of mine grew up not far from here. By the time he was 14 years old, he was over six feet tall and very uncoordinated. He said, "One afternoon when I was in a 10th-grade seminary class, the Spirit really touched me. I came to know that the gospel literally was true. I made up my mind that day that I wanted to serve the Lord in any way I could."

By his senior year, he was well over six feet tall and much more coordinated. Many universities offered him scholarships to play basketball. After his first year playing at a university, he told his coach that he would like to be excused for two years to go on a mission. The coach said, "If you leave, you can be sure of one thing: you will never again wear one of our basketball uniforms!" Many thought that his "mission" ought to be playing basketball. Even some family members, including his parents, tried to convince him not to serve a mission. But he was totally committed. He was willing to give everything to the Lord—the scholarship, the applause of the fans, and the excitement of playing. He knew what the Lord was counting on him to do. He was called, and he served an honorable mission.

When he returned two years later, he was even taller and about 35 pounds heavier. His coach decided to repent. He was permitted to wear one of those basketball uniforms again, and in his senior year, his team not only won the conference championship but went on to the finals in national competition.

The Lord's commandment to His Apostles was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

Modern prophets have taught that every young man who is physically and mentally able should prepare himself to serve an honorable mission. The Lord did not say, "Go on a mission if it fits your schedule, or if you happen to feel like it, or if it doesn't interfere with your scholarship, your romance, or your educational plans." Preaching the gospel is a commandment and not merely a suggestion. It is a blessing and a privilege and not a sacrifice. Remember, even though for some of you there may be very tempting reasons for you not to serve a full-time mission, the Lord and His prophets are counting on you.

More than ever before in my life, I know that Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, and it is led by living prophets. The Lord and His prophets are counting on you to:

1. Be a champion of those who need you.
2. Avoid the trash that surrounds you in the media.
3. Be worthy to enter the temple and fill an honorable mission.

I pray that the world will be a better place because you have lived in it. That is our task, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

My dear brethren, we are all privileged that so many of us in so many countries can be together in this great meeting of the priesthood of the Church. All of us are grateful that our beloved prophet and leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley, is present. We all rejoice that President Hinckley has been able to meet with so many Saints in so many lands since he was called as President of the Church, and he has blessed them greatly. We are grateful for his inspired leadership. I am humbled beyond the power of expression to serve with President Hinckley, President Monson, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities of the Church. I have a most profound respect and appreciation for each of them.

Honesty—a moral compass

Brethren, we all should be concerned about the society in which we live, a society which is like a moral Armageddon. I am concerned about its effect upon us as the holders of the priesthood of God. There are so many in the world who do not seem to know or care about right or wrong. The 13th article of faith is known to all of us. I repeat it for emphasis:

“We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving. John, a nine-year-old Swiss pioneer child who was in one of the handcart companies, is

an example of honesty. His father put a chunk of buffalo meat in the handcart and said it was to be saved for Sunday dinner. John said, “I was so very hungry and the meat smelled so good to me while pushing at the handcart that I could not resist. I had a little pocket knife. . . . Although I expected a severe whipping when father found it out, I cut off little pieces each day. I would chew them so long that they got white and perfectly tasteless. When father came to get the meat he asked me if I had been cutting off some of it. I said ‘Yes. I was so hungry I could not let it alone.’ Instead of giving me a scolding or whipping, father turned away and wiped tears from his eyes.”¹

I wish to speak to you frankly about being honest. Honesty is a moral compass to guide us in our lives. You young men are under great pressure to learn the technology that is expanding and will continue to expand so rapidly. However, the tremendous push to excel in secular learning sometimes tempts people to compromise that which is more important—their honesty and integrity.

J Ballard Washburn challenges cheaters

Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else.

A friend related this experience her husband had while attending medical school. “Getting into medical school is pretty competitive, and the desire to do well and be successful puts a great deal of pressure on the new incoming freshmen. My husband had worked hard on his studies and went to attend his first examination. The honor system was expected behavior at the medical school. The professor passed out the examination and left the room. Within a short time, students started to pull little cheat

papers out from under their papers or from their pockets. My husband recalled his heart beginning to pound as he realized it is pretty hard to compete against cheaters. About that time a tall, lanky student stood up in the back of the room and stated, 'I left my hometown and put my wife and three little babies in an upstairs apartment and worked very hard to get into medical school. And I'll turn in the first one of you who cheats, and *you better believe it!*' They believed it. There were many sheepish expressions, and those cheat papers started to disappear as fast as they had appeared. He set a standard for the class which eventually graduated the largest group in the school's history."²

The young, lanky medical student who challenged the cheaters was J Ballard Washburn, who became a respected physician and in later years received special recognition from the Utah Medical Association for his outstanding service as a medical doctor. He also served as a General Authority and is now the president of the Las Vegas Nevada Temple.

In reality, we are in competition only with ourselves. Others can challenge and motivate us, but we must reach down deep into our souls and call forth our God-given intelligence and capabilities. We cannot do this when we depend on the efforts of someone else.

Honesty is a principle, and we have our moral agency to determine how we will apply this principle. We have the agency to make choices, but ultimately we will be accountable for each choice we make. We may deceive others, but there is One we will never deceive. From the Book of Mormon we learn, "The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name."³

Interview with tough army officers

In the fateful war year of 1942, I was inducted into the United States Army Air Corps. One cold night at Chanute Field, Illinois, I was given all-night guard duty. As I walked around my post, I meditated and pondered the whole miserable, long night through. By morning I had come to some firm conclusions. I was engaged to be married and knew that I could not support my wife on a private's pay. In a day or two, I filed my application for Officer's Candidate School. Shortly thereafter, I was summoned before the board of inquiry. My qualifications were few, but I had had two years of college and had finished a mission for the Church in South America.

The questions asked of me at the officers' board of inquiry took a very surprising turn. Nearly all of them centered upon my beliefs: "Do you smoke?" "Do you drink?" "What do you think of others who smoke and drink?" I had no trouble answering these questions.

"Do you pray?" "Do you believe that an officer should pray?" The officer asking these questions was a hard-bitten career soldier. He did not look like he prayed very often. I pondered. Would I give him offense if I answered how I truly believed? I wanted to be an officer very much so that I would not have to do all-night guard duty and KP and clean latrines, but mostly so my sweetheart and I could afford to be married.

I decided not to equivocate. I admitted that I did pray and that I felt that officers might seek divine guidance as some truly great generals had done. I told them that I thought that officers should be prepared to lead their men in all appropriate activities, if the occasion requires, including prayer.

More interesting questions came. "In times of war, should not the moral code be relaxed? Does not the stress of battle justify men in doing things that

they would not do when at home under normal situations?"

I recognized that here was a chance perhaps to make some points and look broad-minded. I suspected that the men who were asking me this question did not live by the standards that I had been taught. The thought flashed through my mind that perhaps I could say that I had my own beliefs, but I did not wish to impose them on others. But there seemed to flash before my mind the faces of the many people to whom I had taught the law of chastity as a missionary. In the end I simply said, "I do not believe there is a double standard of morality."

I left the hearing resigned to the fact that these hard-bitten officers would not like the answers I had given to their questions and would surely score me very low. A few days later when the scores were posted, to my astonishment I had passed. I was in the first group taken for Officer's Candidate School! I graduated, became a second lieutenant, married my sweetheart, and we have "lived together happily ever after."

This was one of the critical crossroads of my life. Not all of the experiences in my life turned out that way or the way I wanted them to, but they have always been strengthening to my faith.

Stealing dishonors the priesthood

Stealing is all too common throughout the world. For many, their reasoning seems to be, "What can I get away with?" or "It's OK to do it as long as I don't get caught!" Stealing takes many forms, including shoplifting; taking cars, stereos, CD players, video games, and other items that belong to someone else; stealing time, money, and merchandise from employers; stealing from the government by the misuse of the taxpayers' money or making false claims on our income tax returns; or borrowing without any intention of repayment. No one has ever gained anything of value by theft. In the

play *Othello*, Shakespeare has Iago teach a great truth:

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been
slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good
name
Robs me of that which not enriches
him
And makes me poor indeed.⁴

The stealing of anything is unworthy of a priesthood holder.

Any moral dishonesty is inconsistent with exercising the priesthood of God. In fact, the priesthood can be exercised only on the principle of righteousness.⁵ When exercised "in any degree of unrighteousness," it is withdrawn.⁶ You just can't have it both ways. By being dishonest, people cheat only themselves.

Tell the whole truth

There are different shades of truth telling. When we tell little white lies, we become progressively color-blind. It is better to remain silent than to mislead. The degree to which each of us tells the whole truth and nothing but the truth depends on our conscience.

"David Casstevens of the *Dallas Morning News* tells a story about Frank Szymanski, a Notre Dame center in the 1940s, who had been called as a witness in a civil suit at South Bend [Indiana].

"Are you on the Notre Dame football team this year?" the judge asked.

"Yes, Your Honor."

"What position?"

"Center, Your Honor."

"How good a center?"

"Szymanski squirmed in his seat, but said firmly, 'Sir, I'm the best center Notre Dame has ever had.'"

"Coach Frank Leahy, who was in the courtroom, was surprised. Szymanski always had been modest and unassuming. So when the proceedings were over, he

took Szymanski aside and asked why he had made such a statement. Szymanski blushed.

"I hated to do it, Coach," he said. "But, after all, I was under oath." "

Achieve honestly, not on false merit

This summer the Olympic Games were held in Atlanta, Georgia. Many of the athletes had trained most of their lives to compete. Mere hundredths of a second separated the gold, silver, or bronze medals as well as the possibility of fortunes in commercial endorsements.

Some athletes have been known to cheat by taking prohibited chemicals into their bodies in an effort to temporarily enhance their performance. Whether in sports or in the game of life, we need to achieve honestly, under our own steam, and not on false merit.

Bobby Polacio's honesty

I would like to tell you a story of an excellent athlete—a young man with superb character. He never went to the Olympics, but he stands as tall as any Olympian because he was honest with himself and with his God.

The account is told by a coach in a junior high school. He states:

"Today was test day in climbing the rope. We climb from a standing start to a point 15 feet high. [My job is] to train and teach the boys to negotiate this distance in as few seconds as possible.

"The school record for the event is 2.1 seconds. It has stood for three years. Today this record was broken. . . .

"For three years Bobby Polacio, a 14½-year-old ninth-grade . . . boy, [trained and worked, consumed by his dream] of breaking this record.

"In his first of three attempts, Bobby climbed the rope in 2.1 seconds, tying the record. On the second try the watch stopped at 2.0 seconds flat, a record! But as he descended the rope and the

entire class gathered around to check the watch, I knew I must ask Bobby a question. There was a slight doubt in my mind whether or not the board at the 15-foot height had been touched. If he missed, it was so very, very close—not more than a fraction of an inch—and only Bobby knew this answer.

"As he walked toward me, expressionless, I said, 'Bobby, did you touch?' If he had said, 'Yes,' the record he had dreamed of since he was a skinny seventh-grader and had worked for almost daily would be his, and he knew I would trust his word.

"With the class already cheering him for his performance, the slim, brown-skinned boy shook his head negatively. And in this simple gesture, I witnessed a moment of greatness. . . .

" . . . And it was with effort through a tight throat that I told the class: 'This boy has not set a record in the rope climb. No, he has set a much finer record for you and everyone to strive for. He has told the . . . truth.'

"I turned to Bobby and said, 'Bobby, I'm proud of you. You've just set a record many athletes never attain. Now, in your last try I want you to jump a few inches higher on the takeoff.' . . .

"After the other boys had finished their next turns, and Bobby came up . . . for his try, a strange stillness came over the gymnasium. Fifty boys and one coach [watched] breathlessly [as] Bobby Polacio . . . climbed the rope in 1.9 seconds! A school record, a city record, and perhaps close to a national record for a junior high school boy.

"When the bell rang and I walked away, . . . I was thinking: 'Bobby, . . . at 14 you are a better man than I. Thank you for climbing so very, very high today.' "

Honor every form of truth

All of us can climb high when we honor every form of truth. As President

Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "Let the truth be taught by example and precept—that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it."⁹

Holding and exercising the priesthood of God is a marvelous blessing. We are privileged to be part of the unprecedented unrolling of this holy work. We are seeing the remarkable progress of this Church in lands we never dreamed of. Brethren, I am confident the Lord will continue to bless us as we remain honest, faithful, and true to ourselves and to this great cause. The progress of this work is a testimony of its truthfulness, yet each of us can have our own witness through the gift of the Spirit. I have such a witness. That witness permeates the very depths of my soul. May the Lord bless us as we go forth in this holy cause, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1960), 189–90.
2. As related by Janette Hales Beckham.

3. 2 Nephi 9:41.

4. *Othello*, act 3, scene 3, lines 157–61.

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.

7. "Nothing but the Truth," in Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, comps., *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993), 91–92.

8. In Stanley E. Miller and others, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1972), 1:185–86.

9. "Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations," *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 7.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust, for that great message.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Let Us All Press On," and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

President Thomas S. Monson

President Faust, I wish you would tell the clocks in the Tabernacle to be honest. They've changed 2 hours and 40 minutes during the last song! I can't believe it. Take a look, brethren.

"Be thou an example"

As I contemplate the vast audience assembled for this general priesthood meeting of the Church, I seek the help of our Heavenly Father. I approach my responsibility to speak to you with the deepest humility.

Of late I have been studying the teachings of the early Apostles, including their calls, their ministries, and their

very lives. It is a fascinating experience and brings one closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight may I share with you a profound plea given by the Apostle Paul to his beloved Timothy. Paul's words are applicable to each of us: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. . . . Neglect not the gift that is in thee. . . . Meditate upon these things."¹

Brethren, ours is the opportunity to learn, the privilege to obey, and the duty to serve. In our time there are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.

Paying tithing strengthens us

For example, consider the law of tithing. The honest payment of tithing provides a person the inner strength and commitment to comply with the other commandments.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has declared: "There has been laid upon the Church a tremendous responsibility. Tithing is the source of income for the Church to carry forward its mandated activities. The need is always greater than the availability. God help us to be faithful in observing this great principle which comes from him with his marvelous promise."²

From Malachi we read: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . . Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."³

All of us can afford to pay tithing. In reality, none of us can afford not to pay tithing. The Lord will strengthen our resolve. He will open a way to comply.

A family pays tithing and is blessed

May I share with you a letter I received some months ago which provides such an example? The letter begins:

"We live on the edge of a small town, and our neighbor uses our pasture for his cattle and as payment provides us with all the beef we want. Each time we get new meat, we have some of the present supply left over; and since we live in a student ward, we take meat to some students we feel might have use for some good beef.

"During the time my wife was serving in a Relief Society presidency, her secretary was a student's wife, the mother

of eight children. Her husband, Jack, had recently been called as ward clerk.

"My wife had always prayed to know which students might need our help with our excess meat. When she told me she felt we should give some meat to Jack and his family, I was very concerned that we might offend them. So was she. We both were worried because they were a very independent family.

"A few days later, my wife said she still felt we should take the meat to them, and I reluctantly agreed to go along. When we delivered the meat, my wife's hands were actually shaking, and I was very nervous. The children opened the door, and when they heard why we were there, they began dancing around. The parents were reserved but pleasant. When we drove away, my wife and I both were so relieved and happy that they had accepted our gift.

"A few months later our friend Jack got up in testimony meeting and related the following. He said that all his life he had had a hard time paying tithing. With such a large family, they used all the money he made just to get by. When he became ward clerk, he saw all the other people paying tithing and felt he needed to also. He did so for a couple of months, and all was well. Then one month he had a problem. In his job, he completed work and was paid a few months later. He could see that the family was going to be far short of money. He and his wife decided to share the problem with their children. If they paid their tithing, they would run out of food on about the 20th of the month. If they didn't pay their tithing, they could buy enough food to last until the next paycheck. Jack said he wanted to buy [the] food, but the children said they wanted to pay tithing—so Jack paid the tithing, and they all prayed.

"A few days after paying their tithing, we had shown up with our package of meat for them. With the meat, added to what they had, there was no problem

having enough food until the next paycheck.

"There are so many lessons here for me—for instance, always listen to my wife—but for me the most important is that the prayers of people are almost always answered by the actions of others."

Counsel to returning missionaries

I recognize that there are thousands of missionaries attending this priesthood meeting tonight. I wish to share a word or two especially with you. During the time I served as a mission president, and then in thousands of missionary interviews as a member of the Twelve, I said to the missionaries I interviewed, "When you return to your home, I ask that you make three commitments." Eagerly, without knowing what the commitments were, they would nod their approval. I then shared with them this counsel:

1. Prepare well for your vocation, profession, or trade, and be the very best you can be at what you choose to do.

2. Quoting Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Marry the right person [at the right time], in the right place, [and] by the right authority."⁴ Thus far, their responses were spontaneous and enthusiastic. Then I would counsel:

3. Always be active in the Church. Some of the missionaries would look a little quizzical before responding, and I would say, "Let me put the matter another way. Three words provide the formula: *Pay your tithing.*" Each would affirm determination to do so. I truly believe that the payment of an honest tithing will go a long way to ensure continued activity in the Church.

Giving fast offerings blesses all

I could say much more concerning tithing, but tonight I would also wish to address the other part of Malachi's message—namely, offerings.

The concept of fast offerings appears as early as the time of Isaiah when,

speaking of the true fast, he encouraged people to fast and "to deal thy bread to the hungry, and . . . bring the poor that are cast out to thy house."⁵ The Prophet Joseph instituted the practice of collecting fast offerings for the poor in Kirtland, Ohio. And later at Nauvoo, Illinois, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent a general letter to the Church defining "the principle of fasts," stating: "Let this be an ensample to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time; and this is one great and important principle of fasts approved of the Lord. And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance."⁶

The prophets of our day and time have been equally specific. Harold B. Lee counseled: "When you think about it, there is so much promised in the gospel for so little required on our part. For example, the ordinance of baptism is given us for the remission of sins, for entrance into the kingdom—a new birth; the gift of the Holy Ghost gives us the right to companionship with one of the Godhead; administration to the sick qualifies the individual with faith for a special blessing; by paying our tithing, the windows of heaven may be opened unto us; by fasting and by paying our fast offerings, we are told that then we might call on the Lord and He will hear our cry and our call."⁷

President Lee's successor in the Presidency of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball, said: "We wish to remind all the Saints of the blessings that come from observing the regular fast and contributing as generous a fast offering as we can, and as we are in a position to give. Wherever we can, we should give many times the value of the meals from which we abstained."⁸

The honor of collecting fast offerings

President Kimball added: "Collecting fast offerings is an important [duty]. I thought it was a great honor to be a deacon. My father was always considerate . . . and . . . permitted me to take the buggy and horse to gather fast offerings. My responsibility included that part of the town in which I lived, but it was quite a long walk to the homes, and a sack of flour or a bottle of fruit or vegetables or bread became quite heavy as it accumulated. So the buggy was very comfortable and functional. We have changed to cash in later days, but it was commodities in my day. It was a very great honor to do this service for my Heavenly Father: and though times have changed, when money is given generally instead of commodities, it is still a great honor to perform this service."⁹

I imagine you young deacons today also wouldn't mind taking a horse and buggy to gather fast offerings!

I remember when, as a young deacon, I would cover a portion of the ward on fast Sunday morning, giving the small envelope to each family, waiting while a contribution was placed in it, and then returning it to the bishop. On one such occasion, an elderly member, Brother Wright, welcomed me at the door and, with aged hands, fumbled at the tie of the envelope and placed within it a quarter. His eyes fairly twinkled as he made his contribution. He told me of a time years before when the Relief Society president, Sister Balmforth, with food collected from those who had given, carried to his home in a small red wagon food for his cupboard and provided gratitude for his soul. He described her as "an angel sent from heaven." I have not forgotten Eddie Wright.

Taking deacons to Welfare Square

Deacons and others of the Aaronic Priesthood who perform today this sa-

cred service, please know this to be a sacred duty. I recall that as a bishop, one morning the boys in the ward over which I presided had assembled—sleepy-eyed, a bit disheveled, and mildly complaining about arising so early to fulfill their assignment. Not a word of reproof was spoken, but during the following week we escorted the boys to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City for a guided tour. They saw firsthand a lame sister operating the telephone switchboard, an older man stocking shelves, women arranging clothing to be distributed—even a blind person placing labels on cans of food. Here were individuals earning their sustenance through their contributed labors. A penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed how their effort each month helped to collect the sacred fast offering funds which aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.

From that hallowed day forward, we no longer had to urge our deacons with regard to collecting fast offerings. On fast Sunday mornings, they were present at 7:00 A.M., dressed in their Sunday best, anxious to do their duty as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood. No longer were they simply distributing and collecting envelopes. They were helping to provide food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless—all after the way of the Lord. Their smiles were more frequent, their pace more eager, their very souls more subdued. Perhaps now they were marching to the beat of a different drummer; perhaps now they better understood the classic passage, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹⁰

Cleaning the poultry farm

In the vicinity where I lived and served, we operated a poultry project. Most of the time it was an efficiently operated welfare project, supplying to the

storehouse thousands of dozens of fresh eggs and hundreds of pounds of dressed poultry. On a few occasions, however, the experience of being volunteer city farmers provided not only blisters on the hands, but frustration of heart and mind. For instance, I shall ever remember the time we gathered together the teenage Aaronic Priesthood young men to really give the poultry project a spring cleaning. Our enthusiastic and energetic throng gathered at the project and in a speedy fashion uprooted, gathered, and burned large quantities of weeds and debris. By the light of the glowing bonfires, we ate hot dogs and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The project was now neat and tidy. However, there was just one disastrous problem. The noise and the fires had so disturbed the fragile and temperamental population of several thousand laying hens that most of them went into a sudden molt and ceased laying. Thereafter we tolerated a few weeds, that we might produce more eggs.

Blessings of providing for those in need

No member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who has canned peas, topped beets, hauled hay, or shoveled coal in such a cause ever forgets or regrets the experience of helping provide for those in need. Devoted men and women help to operate this vast and inspired welfare program. In reality, the plan would never succeed on effort alone, for this program operates through faith after the way of the Lord.

Brethren, you and your families are to be commended for the manner in which you also contribute generously to the humanitarian efforts of the Church throughout the world. We provide essential help to the needy in times of natural disasters, starvation, sickness, and events that can strike anywhere. Emergency food supplies, clothing, shelter, and medical equipment bring succor to the suf-

fering and peace to the recipient and to the giver—even the peace promised of the Lord. Projects provided by your generosity bring health and happiness through the drilling of wells to provide uncontaminated water to those who have never had such. Children walk who once would have been crippled by polio, thanks to your contributions which provided the vaccine to prevent such tragedies.

Do more to bless those in need

Should you be in Salt Lake City, visit the Sort Center, where millions of pounds of contributed clothing are received, sorted, packed, and shipped to the needy throughout the world as well as to pockets of poverty situated closer to home. One is reminded of the statement made by the Prophet Joseph: "A man filled with the love of God is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."¹¹

Most of you are home teachers. You are the eyes and ears of the bishops in seeking out the poor and the afflicted. While doing their duty, vigilant home teachers have observed unemployed fathers anxious to obtain work; distraught mothers seeing their tiny broods suffer; children crying from hunger, inadequately clothed to protect them from the cold of winter. In one instance, all of the family members were sleeping on the floor because they had no beds. Without delay, needed help was provided.

Remember the counsel from King Benjamin described in Mosiah: "Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish."¹²

Fortunately and commendably, the Church is doing more than it has ever done to relieve suffering, to satisfy hun-

ger, to prevent and cure illness, and to bless those in need. There is more to do.

Brethren, my prayer is that we be "example[s] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹³ Then shall we be recipients of the Lord's promise:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."¹⁴

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Timothy 4:12, 14, 15.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 41.
3. Malachi 3:8, 10.
4. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 118.
5. Isaiah 58:7.
6. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
7. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 366-67.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.

9. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 146.
10. Matthew 25:40.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 174.
12. Mosiah 4:16.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-6.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. I hope they can get the clocks going by then. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express our very deep gratitude to the Provo MTC men's choir for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will be offered by Elder Richard B. Wirthlin of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Travels to meet with the Saints

My dear brethren, we have received good counsel this evening.

Since we met last April, I have been much out among our people. I have determined that for so long as I have the strength to do so, I will get out and meet with the Saints I love, both the youth and the adults. I have in recent months participated in many meetings with more than 300,000 Latter-day Saints in 17 different nations. We have traveled from sea to sea across the United States, and extensively in Asia and in Europe. I do not enjoy travel. I weary of it. Jet lag, for me, is a very real thing. But I do enjoy looking into the faces and shaking the hands of faithful Latter-day Saints,

and I thank those who have made this possible.

As I have gone about the world, I have had opportunity for interviews with representatives of the media. This is always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked. These reporters are men and women of great capacity, who know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience, but it represents an opportunity to tell the world something of our story. As Paul said to Festus and Agrippa, "This thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

We have something that this world needs to hear about, and these interviews afford an opportunity to give voice to that.

Interview with Mike Wallace

One of the most extensive interviews was with Mr. Mike Wallace of the CBS *60 Minutes* program. I express appreciation to Senator Orrin Hatch, Willard Marriott Jr., and Steve Young (who ought to be here this evening—and probably *is* somewhere), who participated in this program.

Millions saw the outcome this last Easter Sunday, as Elder Haight said this morning. The editors of the program distilled about 15 minutes out of many hours of filming.

I developed a deep respect for Mr. Wallace. He is a very able professional. He was courteous, respectful, incisive in his questions—one who might be described as a tough, streetwise reporter with long experience, but a gentleman in the best sense of the word.

I first met him at a luncheon at the Harvard Club in New York about a year ago. He then came to Salt Lake City on two different occasions and interviewed me at great length in my office. I have thought this evening to read parts of those interviews as they were recorded—his questions and my extemporaneous answers just as they were given and without editing except to delete areas in the interest of time and add in brackets an occasional needed word. I do so in the spirit of reaffirming the position of this Church on a number of different and significant matters of general concern. For the most part, this is from the material not used in the broadcast.

Here are Mr. Wallace's questions and my extemporaneous, unrehearsed answers.

Correcting misconceptions

Mr. Wallace: "Are you concerned about misconceptions about the Mormon Church?"

My answer: "There are still many ideas that persist concerning us. We are not well known. We have grown up in

the West [for the most part]. The Church originated in Palmyra, New York. You have heard of the Mormon migration to the West, . . . where we established some three or four hundred different communities. . . . We would like to . . . let people come to know us for what we are and what we are trying to accomplish."

The great work of women in the Church

Question: "Are there any conflicts between your convictions about families and women's roles with the family and the aspirations of some women to occupy leadership positions in your Church?"

Reply: "We have a few women who feel that women should hold the priesthood. We have a great women's organization. I believe it is the largest women's organization in the world—our women's Relief Society. They have their own officers who preside over their own organization. They carry forward a tremendous program of education among women. I think they are happy. They are doing a great work."

Efforts to strengthen families

Mr. Wallace: "Since World War II, we seem to be splintering; we seem to be becoming more selfish, more self-absorbed, less community minded. Families don't seem to mean so much, and morality has gone to hell [his expression] in a handbasket. Why?"

Response: "The basic failure is in our homes. Parents haven't measured up to their responsibilities. It is evident. A nation will rise no higher than the strength of its homes. If you want to reform a nation, you begin with families, with parents who teach their children principles and values that are positive and affirmative and will lead them to worthwhile endeavors. That is the basic failure that has taken place in America. And we are making a tremendous effort to bring about greater solidarity in fami-

lies. Parents have no greater responsibility in this world than the bringing up of their children in the right way, and they will have no greater satisfaction as the years pass than to see those children grow in integrity and honesty and make something of their lives."

Codes of health and morality

His question: "Your Church has a very strict code of health. Why is that a part of religion?"

Reply: "The body is the temple of the spirit. The body is sacred. It was created in the image of God. It is something to be cared for and used for good purposes. It ought to be taken care of, and this thing which we call the Word of Wisdom, which is a code of health, is most helpful in doing that."

His question: "For some, particularly those who are not Mormons, your teachings demand conformity, rigidity. Those are the complaints one hears."

Response: "Oh, yes, you may hear those complaints. I don't think it is so. I don't think there is substance to it. Our people have tremendous liberty. They are free to live their lives as they please."

He asked: "Are they?"

Answer: "Oh, absolutely. Surely. They have to make choices. It is the old eternal battle that has been going on since the War in Heaven, spoken of in the book of Revelation—the forces of evil against the forces of good. We all exercise agency in the choices we make."

Mr. Wallace: "You also have a moral code."

Reply: "We believe in chastity before marriage and total fidelity after marriage. That sums it up. That is the way to happiness in living. That is the way to satisfaction. It brings peace to the heart and peace to the home."

Next question: "Some of the students we've talked to say that the health code is easy compared to no premarital sex. . . . They say that not smoking or not

drinking is a clear line but that the sexual line is somewhere—[well,] they are confused, some of them anyway, about where that line is."

Response: "Oh, I think they know. Any young man or woman who has grown up in this Church knows where that line is. When you see yourself slipping, begin to exercise some self-discipline. And if it is a serious problem, take it to the Lord. Talk with God about it. Share your burden with Him. He will give you strength. He will help you. They know that. I am confident they know that."

Roles of men and women

Mr. Wallace: "Why must only men run the Church?"

Reply: "'Only men' do not run the Church. Men have their place in the Church. Men hold the priesthood offices of the Church. But women have a tremendous place in this Church. They have their own organization. It was started in 1842 by the Prophet Joseph Smith and called the Relief Society because its initial purpose was to administer help to those in need. It has grown to be, I think, the largest women's organization in the world, with a membership of more than three million. They have their own offices, their own presidency, their own board. That reaches down to the smallest unit of the Church everywhere in the world."

His next question: "But they don't have the power."

Response: "They have office. They have responsibility. They have control of their organization."

Mr. Wallace: "But you run it. The men run it. Look, I'm not being—"

Answer: "The men hold the priesthood, yes. But my wife is my companion. In this Church the man neither walks ahead of his wife nor behind his wife but at her side. They are coequals in this life in a great enterprise."

Size of families

Mr. Wallace: "Why is it that Mormons apparently have so many children?"

Reply: "We don't dictate family size. That is left to the father and the mother, the husband and wife. And we expect them to make of this the most serious business of their lives, the rearing of the family."

Great growth of the Church

Next question: "There are those who say that Mormonism began as a cult. You don't like to hear that."

Response: "I don't know what that means, really. But if it has negative connotations, I don't accept it as applying to this Church. People may have applied it; they may have applied it in the early days. But look, here is this great Church now. There are only six churches in America with more members than this Church. We are the second church in membership in the state of California. We are reaching out across the world. We are in more than 150 nations. This is a great, strong, viable organization with a tremendous outreach. . . . You will find our people in business institutions, high in educational circles, in politics, in government, in whatever. We are [rather] ordinary people trying to do an extraordinary work."

Tithing and the use of Church funds

Mr. Wallace: "It's expensive to be a Mormon."

Answer: "Oh, it isn't expensive. We are living by the law of the Lord—tithing."

Question: "But 10 percent of your gross goes to the Church, and you have nothing to do with the way the money is spent—an average Mormon, that is."

Reply: "The average Mormon has a good deal to do with it. He is a member of the Church."

Mr. Wallace: "But he has nothing to do with how it is going to be spent."

Response: "If he is a bishop, he has the expenditures of his ward. A lot of that money comes back to the local units. What is that money used for? It is used for Church purposes."

His question: "What are Church purposes exactly?"

Answer: "Building chapels—about 375 a year. Think about that—new buildings each year to accommodate the needs of the growing membership. It is used for education. We maintain the largest private, church-sponsored university in the world, Brigham Young University, with its 27,000 students on that campus, as well as other campuses. We maintain a tremendous institute of religion program, where we have off-campus connections with [students in] the major universities of America. You will find institutes at UCLA, USC, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of New York, the University of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and so forth.

"When it comes to the financial circumstances of the Church, we have all funds carefully audited. We have a corps of auditors who are qualified CPAs who are independent from all other agencies of the Church and who report only to the First Presidency of the Church. We try to be very careful. I keep on the credenza behind my desk a widow's mite that was given me in Jerusalem many years ago as a reminder, a constant reminder, of the sanctity of the funds with which we have to deal. They come from the widow; they are her offering as well as the tithe of the rich man, and they are to be used with care and discretion for the purposes of the Lord. We treat them carefully and safeguard them and try in every way that we can to see that they are used as we feel the Lord would have them used for the upbuilding of His work and the betterment of people."

Service of full-time missionaries

Mr. Wallace: "Young men and women give two years of their lives to serve as missionaries?"

Response: "Young women serve 18 months. The work is strenuous; it is difficult. It isn't easy to go to New York or London or Tokyo and knock on doors and face people you have never met before. But it does something for you. It does two or three things. It creates in the first place a feeling of reliance upon the Lord. . . . It builds within [a young man] something of strength and capacity. If he goes to a foreign land, he develops expertise in the language; he learns to speak the language of the people. Wherever he goes, he comes to know the people among whom he serves and brings back with him something of their culture, their way of doing things, with appreciation and respect for them and their conditions and circumstances. There is nothing like it—when you think that we have more than 50,000 out right now, and that number is constantly rotating so that it touches the lives of hundreds of thousands of these people. . . . I can walk down the streets of Salt Lake City with you and meet people who speak fluently in Japanese and Chinese and Swedish and Norwegian and Finnish and Spanish and Portuguese and who have love in their hearts for the people among whom they served."

The principle of self-reliance

Question: "Why are members of the Church expected to keep a year's supply of food, clothing, and fuel?"

Reply: "We teach self-reliance as a principle of life, that we ought to provide for ourselves and take care of our own needs. And so we encourage our people to have something, to plan ahead, keep . . . food on hand, to establish a savings account, if possible, against a rainy day. Catastrophes come to people sometimes

when least expected—unemployment, sickness, things of that kind. The individual, as we teach, ought to do for himself all that he can. When he has exhausted his resources, he ought to turn to his family to assist him. When the family can't do it, the Church takes over. And when the Church takes over, our great desire is to first take care of his immediate needs and then to help him for so long as he needs to be helped, but in that process to assist him in training, in securing employment, in finding some way of getting on his feet again. That's the whole objective of this great welfare program."

Cleanliness of Salt Lake City

Mr. Wallace: "Why is Salt Lake City so clean?"

Answer: "Well, we hope it is a reflection of the people who live here."

Mr. Wallace: "It is astonishing to walk down the streets of Salt Lake City." [He'd just come from New York City.]

Response: "We hope it will stay that way. I hope that it reflects, in some measure at least, some of the teachings of this Church. Look at the beauties of Temple Square right here in the heart of the city, the very core of the city. Look at the magnificent temple and that great Tabernacle. They were built with vision by people with culture, with refinement, with artistry. These are not the work of charlatans. They are the work of people who had a great vision to do beautiful things."

How the prophet receives revelation

Mr. Wallace: "The Mormons, Mr. President, call you a 'living Moses,' a prophet who literally communicates with Jesus. How do you do that?"

Reply: "Let me say first that there is a tremendous history behind this Church, a history of prophecy, a history of revela-

tion, and . . . decisions which set the pattern of the Church so that there are not constant recurring problems that require any special dispensation. But there are occasionally things that arise where the will of the Lord [is needed and] is sought, and in those circumstances I think the best way I could describe the process is to liken it to the experience of Elijah as set forth in the book of First Kings. Elijah spoke to the Lord, and there was a wind, a great wind, and the Lord was not in the wind. And there was an earthquake, and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And there was a fire, and the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a still, small voice, which I describe as the whisperings of the Spirit. (See 1 Kings 19:9-12.) Now, let me just say, categorically, that the things of God are understood by the Spirit of God, and one must have and seek and cultivate that Spirit, and there comes understanding and it is real. I can give testimony of that."

Why we preach the gospel

Question: "Why is your Church so aggressive about spreading the word, having missionaries knock on doors where they may not be welcome and where they're obviously not invited?"

Answer: "We believe that the Lord meant what He said when He said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16:15). We believe in that mandate. We think it rests upon us to try to fulfill it. We are doing that with all of the energy and resources that we have."

Mr. Wallace: "How do you view non-Mormons?"

Response: "With love and respect. I have many non-Mormon friends. I respect them. I have the greatest of admiration for them."

Question: "Despite the fact that they haven't really seen the light yet?"

Reply: "Yes. To anybody who is not of this Church, I say we recognize all of the virtues and the good that you have. Bring it with you and see if we might add to it."

Brigham Young's prophetic vision

Mr. Wallace: "Tell me about Brigham Young."

Reply: "Brigham Young had a prophetic vision. Can anyone doubt it who looks around here today? No. And that's the way it is with this Church. It has been led by revelation. 'We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and . . . that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God' for the blessing of His sons and daughters wherever they may be found" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Changes come by revelation

Question: "As you know, some skeptics say that major changes in Church policy have come from political pressures, not necessarily as revelations from God. For example, the business of ending polygamy, say the skeptics, wasn't because it was revelation but because Utah wanted to become a state."

Response: "One of the purposes of a prophet is to seek the wisdom and the will of the Lord and to teach his people accordingly. It was the case with Moses when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. It was the case for the Old Testament prophets when people were faced with oppression and trouble and difficulty. That is the purpose of a prophet, to give answers to people for the dilemmas in which they find themselves. That is what happens. That is what we see happen. Is it a matter of expediency, political expediency? No! Inspired guidance? Yes!"

The Church's efforts to fight abuse

Mr. Wallace: "How big a problem, Mr. President, is child abuse in the Mormon Church?"

Reply: "I hope it isn't a big problem. . . . This is a serious phenomenon that is finding expression all over the world. It is a terrible thing. It is a wicked thing. It is a reprehensible thing. It is a thing of which I have spoken time and again."

Question: "What are you doing to reduce it?"

Response: "We are doing everything we know how to reduce it. We are teaching our people. We are talking about it. We have set up a course of instruction for our bishops all across the nation. All last year we carried on an educational program. We have set up a help-line for them where they can get professional counseling and help with these problems. We have issued a journal dealing with child abuse, spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly, the whole problem of abuse. We are concerned about it. I am deeply concerned about the victims. My heart reaches out to them. I want to do everything we can to ease the pain, to preclude the happening of this evil and wicked thing. . . . I know of no other organization in this world that has taken more exhaustive measures, tried harder, done more to tackle this problem, to work with it, to do something to make a change. We recognize the terrible nature of it, and we want to help our people, reach out to them, assist them."

Mr. Wallace: "One sociologist tells us that the root of the problem is the fact that men, in effect, in your Church have authority over women so that your clergymen tend to sympathize with the men being abusers instead of with the abused."

Response: "That is one person's opinion. I don't think there is any substance to it. I think that the men of this Church, the bishops of this Church, the officers of this Church are as concerned

with the welfare of the women of the Church as they are with the men of the Church and with the children of the Church. I wouldn't hesitate to say that for one minute. I am confident of that. I have been around a long time. I have known this Church from the ground up, inside and out, over a very, very long period of time. I am 85 years of age now and I've lived with it all my life and I think I know how it functions. I think I know the attitude of our people. Now, there will be a blip here, a blip there, a mistake here, a mistake there. But by and large the work is wonderful, and vast good is being accomplished, and the welfare of women and children is as seriously considered as is the welfare of the men in this Church, if not more so."

Walk with faith and righteousness

Well, brethren, that's enough for this occasion. Needless to say, we were blessed of the Lord. Now in conclusion I wish to say that none of us ever need hesitate to speak up for this Church, for its doctrine, for its people, for its divine organization and divinely given responsibility. It is true. It is the work of God. The only things that can ever embarrass this work are acts of disobedience to its doctrine and standards by those of its membership. That places upon each of us a tremendous responsibility. This work will be judged by what the world sees of our behavior. God give us the will to walk with faith, the discipline to do what is right at all times and in all circumstances, the resolution to make of our lives a declaration of this cause before all who see us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful autumn Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City to the fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Spencer J. Condie, and W. Don Ladd are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Gene R. Cook, Alexander B. Morrison, Neil L. Andersen, and C. Max Caldwell are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders; those of other faiths who honor us with their presence; and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Praise to the Lord."

The choir will now sing "Our Savior's Love," following which Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Wickman.

We shall now be pleased to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

To those with heartrending challenges

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, the responsibility of speaking to you today prompts me to earnestly ask for your faith and prayers. Today I speak to those who have heartrending challenges. I speak to those who suffer, to those who mourn and have heartaches. I speak to those with physical, mental, or emotional pain. I speak to those born

crippled or who have become crippled. I speak to those who were born blind or who can no longer see the sunsets. I speak to those who have never been able or who are no longer able to hear a bird sing. I speak to those who have the privileged responsibility of helping others who have mental and physical disabilities. I also speak to those who may be in serious transgression.

I take as my text the words of the Savior to the sorrowing Mary Magdalene, who “stood without at the sepulchre weeping.”¹ As she turned around, she “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?”²

The Savior was speaking not just to the sorrowing Mary. He was also speaking to us—men, women, and children and all of mankind ever born or yet to be born, for the tears of sorrow, pain, or remorse are the common lot of mankind.

The complexities of this life at times tend to be very dehumanizing and overwhelming. Some have so much, while others struggle with so very little.

It is a joy to meet with the faithful Saints of the Church all over the world. Even though some of them have difficulties and challenges and lack material wealth, they seem to find much happiness and are able to walk in faith over the rough cobblestones of life. Their deep faith strengthens ours as we meet with them.

Healing power of the Atonement

Many who think that life is unfair do not see things within the larger vision of what the Savior did for us through the Atonement and the Resurrection. Each of us has at times agony, heartbreak, and despair when we must, like Job, reach deep down inside to the bedrock of our own faith. The depth of our belief in the Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior will, I believe, determine the measure of courage and purpose with which we meet life's challenges.

The first words of the risen Lord to His disciples were, “Peace be unto you.”³ He has also promised “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”⁴ The Atonement and the Resurrection have taken place. Our Lord and Savior suffered that appalling agony in

Gethsemane. He performed the ultimate sacrifice in dying on the cross and then breaking the bonds of death.

All of us benefit from the transcendent blessings of the Atonement and the Resurrection, through which the divine healing process can work in our lives. The hurt can be replaced by the joy the Savior promised. To the doubting Thomas, Jesus said, “Be not faithless, but believing.”⁵ Through faith and righteousness, all of the inequities, injuries, and pains of this life can be fully compensated for and made right. Blessings denied in this life will be fully recompensed in the eternities. Through complete repentance of our sins, we can be forgiven and we can enjoy eternal life. Thus our suffering in this life can be as the refining fire, purifying us for a higher purpose. Heartaches can be healed, and we can come to know a soul-satisfying joy and happiness beyond our dreams and expectations.

The resolution promised by the Atonement and the Resurrection continues in eternity. Physical limitations will be compensated. Alma's words are comforting: “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”⁶

The resolution is brought about by the Savior's intercession. As He said in the great intercessory prayer found in the 17th chapter of John, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”⁷ Then the Savior prayed for His Apostles and all of the Saints, saying:

“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”⁸

The healing process of repentance

All of us have made wrong turns along the way. I believe the kind and merciful God, whose children we are, will judge us as lightly as He can for the wrongs that we have done and give us the maximum blessing for the good that we do. Alma's sublime utterance seems to me an affirmation of this. Said Alma, "And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers."⁹

Of vital importance is resolving transgression, experiencing the healing process which comes of repentance. As President Kimball reminds us:

"The principle of repentance—of rising again whenever we fall, brushing ourselves off, and setting off again on that upward trail—is the basis for our hope. It is through repentance that the Lord Jesus Christ can work his healing miracle, infusing us with strength when we are weak, health when we are sick, hope when we are downhearted, love when we feel empty, and understanding when we search for truth."¹⁰

One of the tender stories of the Book of Mormon takes place when Alma speaks to his son Corianton, who has fallen into transgression while on a mission to the Zoramites. As Alma counsels him to forsake his sin and turn again to the Lord, he learns that Corianton is worried about what will happen to him in the Resurrection. There follows a detailed treatment of the probationary state of this life, of justice versus mercy, and God's plan for our happiness in the hereafter, culminating in this verse:

"And mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back

men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice."¹¹

Stay free from evil

The Savior gives us a profound key by which we can cope with and even surmount the debilitating forces of the world. Said the Savior, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."¹² This grand key, then, is that regardless of the saturation of wickedness around us, we must stay free from the evil of the world. The Savior's prayer both commands us to avoid evil and proffers divine help to do so. Through this effort, we become one with our Lord. The prayer of the Savior in Gethsemane was "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."¹³

To remain true and faithful through this mortal vale of tears, we must love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves. We must also stand together as families; as members of wards and branches, stakes and districts; and as a people. To our neighbors not of our faith, we should be as the good Samaritan who cared for the man who fell among thieves.¹⁴ We must gather strength from each other. We must also "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."¹⁵

Paul taught well on this subject. Said he to the Corinthians, speaking of the body, or the Church, of Christ:

"There should be no schism in the body; but . . . the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."¹⁶

In this way, as individuals and as a people we may be kept from evil. As we go through travail and difficulty, we may feel sorry for ourselves and despair; but with the love of God and with the Saints unitedly bearing each other's burdens, we can be happy and overcome evil.

The Savior values womanhood

Some faithful women have been denied that which is at the very center of their souls. In the eternal plan, no blessing will be kept from the faithful. No woman should question how the Savior values womanhood. The grieving Mary Magdalene was the first to visit the sepulchre after the Crucifixion, and when she saw that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty, she ran to tell Peter and John. The two Apostles came to see and then went away sorrowing. But Mary stayed. She had stood near the cross.¹⁷ She had been at the burial.¹⁸ And now she stood weeping by the empty sepulchre.¹⁹ There she was honored to be the first mortal to see the risen Lord. After He said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she was instructed by Him, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."²⁰

Jesus teaches the woman at the well

During His mortal ministry, Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee. He arrived at Jacob's well thirsty and weary from traveling. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jewish convention at the time forbade dealings with Samaritans. Yet "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. . . .

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? . . .

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Jesus went on to teach her about the living water "springing up into everlasting life." The Samaritan woman responded, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then she "saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." At this point Jesus revealed His true identity to her: "I that speak unto thee am he."²¹

Elizabeth Jackson's enduring faith

The Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior can be a constant fortifying influence in our lives as illustrated by the account of Elizabeth Jackson, a pioneer in the Martin Handcart Company. She tells of the death of her husband, Aaron, on the Wyoming plains in 1856 in these moving words:

"About nine o'clock I retired. Bedding had become very scarce so I did not disrobe. I slept until, as it appeared to me, about midnight. I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed, he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My husband was dead. I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid; and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. Oh, how the dreary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the male part of the company prepared the body for burial. And oh, such a burial and funeral service. They did not remove his clothing—he had but little. They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who

had died, and then covered him up with snow. The ground was frozen so hard that they could not dig a grave. He was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of God shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more."²²

Savior's sacrifice will wipe away tears

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" we turn to the comforting words written to the faithful Saints by John in the book of Revelation:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."²³

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" I testify of the great atoning sacrifice and breaking of the bonds of death by the Lord Jesus Christ, which shall indeed wipe away our tears. I have a witness of this. It has been given by the Holy Spirit of God.

I also testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of this Church today. We see His omnipotent hand guiding this holy work. I further testify to the prophetic calling and great leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley as His servant under whose inspired direction we are all privileged to serve. President

Monson and our beloved associates are witnesses of this.

"Be steadfast and immovable"

I pray, as did King Benjamin, that we shall "be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal [us] his, that [we] may be brought to heaven, that [we] may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all."²⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 20:11.
2. John 20:14-15.
3. John 20:19.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
5. John 20:27.
6. Alma 40:23.
7. John 17:3.
8. John 17:9-10.
9. Alma 9:26.
10. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 106.
11. Alma 42:23.
12. John 17:15.
13. John 17:21.
14. See Luke 10:29-37.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
16. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.
17. See Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25.
18. See Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47.
19. See John 20:11.
20. John 20:17.
21. See John 4:6-26.
22. Quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1976), 111.
23. Revelation 7:14-17.
24. Mosiah 5:15.

The choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, and the Tabernacle

Choir has sung "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"Always have his Spirit"

I have chosen to speak about the relationship between our partaking of the sacrament and our enjoying the blessings available from the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In modern revelation the Lord commanded, "That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9). As we partake of the sacrament each week, we ponder the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and we reaffirm and renew the covenants we made when we were baptized. These acts of worship and commitment are described in the revealed prayer the priest offers upon the bread. As stated in that prayer, we partake of the bread "in remembrance of the body" of our Savior, and by doing so we witness to God, the Eternal Father, "that [we] are willing to take upon [us] the name of [his] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]" (D&C 20:77).

After we were baptized, hands were laid upon our heads and we were given the gift of the Holy Ghost. When we consciously and sincerely renew our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament, we renew our qualification for the promise "that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]" (D&C 20:77).

We cannot overstate the importance of that promise. President Wilford Woodruff called the gift of the Holy Ghost the greatest gift we can receive in mortality

(see *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 5). Unfortunately the great value of that gift and the important conditions for its fulfillment are not well understood. Nephi prophesied that in the last days churches would be built up that would "teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance" (2 Nephi 28:4). He also pronounced "wo" upon "him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!" (v. 26).

Scriptural teachings about the Holy Ghost

The Bible tells us that when the Savior gave His final instructions to His disciples, He promised that He would send them "the Comforter" (John 16:7). Earlier He had taught them the mission of this Comforter, who is otherwise referred to as the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, or simply the Spirit. That Comforter dwells in us (see John 14:17). He teaches us all things and brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26). He guides us into truth and shows us things to come (see John 16:13). He testifies of the Son (see John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3). The Bible also teaches that the Savior and His servants will baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (see Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). I will speak of the meaning of that teaching later.

The Bible's teachings about the Holy Ghost are reaffirmed and elaborated in the Book of Mormon and in modern rev-

elations. The Holy Ghost is the means by which God inspires and reveals His will to His children (see, for example, D&C 8:2–3). The Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and of the Son (see 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 20:27; 42:17). He enlightens our minds and fills us with joy (see D&C 11:13). By the power of the Holy Ghost we may know the truth of all things (see Moroni 10:5). By His power we may have the mysteries of God unfolded to us (see 1 Nephi 10:19), all things which are expedient (see D&C 18:18; 39:6). The Holy Ghost shows us what we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). We teach the gospel as we are directed by the Holy Ghost, which carries our words into the hearts of those we teach (see 2 Nephi 33:1).

Latter-day scriptures also teach that the remission of sins, which is made possible by the Atonement, comes “by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost” (D&C 19:31; see also 2 Nephi 31:17). Thus, the Risen Lord pleaded with the Nephites to repent and come unto Him and be baptized “that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20).

A distinguishing part of our faith

The gift of the Holy Ghost is so important to our faith that a prophet gave it unique emphasis in a conversation with the president of the United States. Joseph Smith had journeyed to Washington to seek help in recovering compensation for injuries and losses the Saints had suffered in the Missouri persecutions. In his meeting with the president, Joseph was asked how this Church differed from the other religions of the day. The Prophet replied that “we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands” (*History of the Church*, 4:42). He later explained that this answer was given because “all other considerations

were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*History of the Church*, 4:42).

In highlighting the gift of the Holy Ghost as a distinguishing characteristic of our faith, we need to understand the important differences between (1) the Light of Christ, (2) a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, and (3) the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The Light of Christ

The Light of Christ, which is sometimes called the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:46). This is the light “which is in all things, which giveth life to all things” (D&C 88:13). The prophet Mormon taught that “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16; see also v. 19; 2 Nephi 2:5; Helaman 14:31). Elder Lorenzo Snow spoke of this light when he said, “Everybody has the Spirit of God” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:304). The Light of Christ enlightens and gives understanding to all men (see D&C 88:11).

Manifestations of the Holy Ghost

In contrast, a manifestation of the Holy Ghost is more focused. This manifestation is given to acquaint sincere seekers with the truth about the Lord and His gospel. For example, the prophet Moroni promises that when we study the Book of Mormon and seek to know whether it is true, sincerely and with real intent, God will “manifest the truth of it unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). Moroni also records this promise from the Risen Lord: “He that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true” (Ether 4:11).

These manifestations are available to everyone. The Book of Mormon declares that the Savior “manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (2 Nephi 26:13).

To repeat, the Light of Christ is given to all men and women that they may know good from evil; manifestations of the Holy Ghost are given to lead sincere seekers to gospel truths that will persuade them to repentance and baptism.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost is more comprehensive. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the *gift* of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 199; italics added).

The gift of the Holy Ghost includes the right to constant companionship, that we may “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77).

A newly baptized member told me what she felt when she received that gift. This was a faithful Christian woman who had spent her life in service to others. She knew and loved the Lord, and she had felt the manifestations of His Spirit. When she received the added light of the restored gospel, she was baptized and the elders placed their hands upon her head and gave her the gift of the Holy Ghost. She recalled, “I felt the influence of the Holy Ghost settle upon

me with greater intensity than I had ever felt before. He was like an old friend who had guided me in the past but now had come to stay.”

For faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ, the companionship of the Holy Spirit should be so familiar that we must use care not to take it for granted. For example, that good feeling you have felt during the messages and music of this conference is a confirming witness of the Spirit, available to faithful members on a continuing basis. A member once asked me why he felt so good about the talks and music in a sacrament meeting, while a guest he had invited that day apparently experienced no such feeling. This is but one illustration of the contrast between one who has the gift of the Holy Ghost and is in tune with His promptings and one who has not, or is not.

If we are practicing our faith and seeking the companionship of the Holy Spirit, His presence can be felt in our hearts and in our homes. A family having daily family prayers and seeking to keep the commandments of God and honor His name and speak lovingly to one another will have a spiritual feeling in their home that will be discernible to all who enter it. I know this because I have felt the presence or absence of that feeling in many LDS homes.

It is important to remember that the illumination and revelation that come to an individual as a result of the gift of the Holy Ghost do not come suddenly or without seeking. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that the Holy Ghost “comes a little at a time as you merit it. And as your life is in harmony, you gradually receive the Holy Ghost in a great measure” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 114).

The blessings available through the gift of the Holy Ghost are conditioned upon worthiness. “The Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples” (Hela-

man 4:24; see also Mosiah 2:36–37; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Even though we have a right to His constant companionship, the Spirit of the Lord will dwell with us only when we keep the commandments. He will withdraw when we offend Him by profanity, uncleanness, disobedience, rebellion, or other serious sins.

Worthy men and women who have the gift of the Holy Ghost can be edified and guided by inspiration and revelation. The Lord has declared that “the mysteries of his kingdom . . . are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him” (D&C 76:114, 116).

A few years ago I met with a prospective mission president and his wife to discuss their availability for service. I asked whether their responsibilities to aged parents would preclude their service at that time. This sister was the only daughter of a wonderful mother, then about 80, whom she visited and helped each week. Though somewhat dependent physically, this mother was strong spiritually. She had served four missions and 15 years as a temple worker. Because she was in tune with the Spirit, she had a remarkable experience. Several months before this interview, she told her daughter that the Spirit had whispered that her daughter’s husband would be called as a mission president. So advised, the mother had prepared herself for the needed separation and assured her daughter, long in advance of my assignment for the exploratory interview, that she would “not be a hindrance” to their service.

Renew covenants to have His Spirit

The need to keep our personal temple clean in order to have the companionship and guidance of the Holy Ghost explains the importance of the commandment to partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath.

In partaking of the sacrament, we can renew the effects of our baptism. When we desire a remission of our sins through the Atonement of our Savior, we are commanded to repent and come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; Moroni 6:2; D&C 20:37). In the waters of baptism we witness to the Lord that we have repented of our sins and are willing to take His name upon us and serve Him to the end (see D&C 20:37). The effects are described by Nephi: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17; see also Moroni 6:4). That last promise is fulfilled as a result of our receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The renewal of our covenants by partaking of the sacrament should also be preceded by repentance, so we come to that sacred ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 12:19; D&C 59:8). Then, as we renew our baptismal covenants and affirm that we will “always remember him” (D&C 20:77), the Lord will renew the promised remission of our sins, under the conditions and at the time He chooses. One of the primary purposes and effects of this renewal of covenants and cleansing from sin is “that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77).

Attitude when taking the sacrament

My brothers and sisters, I solemnly witness to you that these doctrines and principles are true. In view of these truths, I plead with all members of the Church, young and old, to attend sacrament meeting each Sabbath day and to partake of the sacrament with the repentant attitude described as “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). I pray that we will do so with the reverence and worship of our Savior that will signify a serious covenant to “always remember

him" (D&C 20:77). The Savior himself has said that we should partake "with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins" (D&C 27:2).

I pray that we will also partake of the sacrament with the submissive manner that will help us accept and serve in Church callings in order to comply with our solemn covenant to take His name and His work upon us. I also plead for us to comply with our solemn covenant to keep His commandments.

Promises of the sacrament

To those brothers and sisters who may have allowed themselves to become lax in this vital renewal of the covenants of the sacrament, I plead in words of the First Presidency that you "come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints" ("An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3). Let us qualify ourselves for our Savior's promise that by partaking of the sacrament we will "be filled" (3 Nephi 20:8; see also 3 Nephi 18:9), which means that we will be "filled with the Spirit" (3 Nephi 20:9). That Spirit—the Holy Ghost—is our comforter, our direction finder, our communicator, our interpreter, our witness, and our purifier—our infallible guide and sanctifier for our mortal journey toward eternal life.

Any who may have thought it a small thing to partake of the sacrament should remember the Lord's declaration that the foundation of a great work is laid by small things, for "out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33). Out of the seemingly small act of consciously and reverently renewing our baptismal covenants comes a renewal of the blessings of baptism by water and by the Spirit, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. In this way all of us will be guided, and in this way all of us can be cleansed. That we may qualify for these precious blessings is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Consider the Lilies."

President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us. The choir then sang "Consider the Lilies."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." We shall then hear from Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

"We care enough to send our very best"

Today I would like to address my remarks to those not of our faith who are joining us in these proceedings. I speak as one of approximately 100,000 mothers

and fathers of more than 50,000 missionaries from our Church who are serving the Lord in all parts of the world. Paraphrasing the slogan of a prominent greeting card company, "We care enough to send our very best."¹

The parents I speak for today come from all parts of the world. They come from the plains of Iowa and the streets of the Bronx. They come from the cities of Peru and Bolivia. They come from the rolling mountains of the Ozarks and the jungles of Colombia and Kenya. They come from every economic, social background there is. Yet they all have one common trait: "They cared enough to send their very best." Yes, we send to you for two years our choice young men and women at the dawn of their adulthood. We send to you our children, whom we have loved, taught, and nurtured.

We rejoice in their successes, we suffer their discouragements and setbacks, and we pray for them continually. In short, we have the same loving feelings, emotions, and dreams for them as you have for your children.

We send these young men, young women, and mature couples to all parts of the world, wherever hosting governments and countries will welcome them. They live under all sorts of conditions, almost always substantially below the comforts to which they are accustomed. They often live in unfamiliar environments, which are sometimes unfriendly to those who would teach the saving truths of Jesus Christ.

To the many thousands of you not of our faith who have befriended these young people, we give our most sincere thanks and we pray that God's choicest blessings will be with you.

Serving a mission takes commitment

The call to serve a mission seldom comes at a convenient time. Most missionaries are just a year out of high school. Many have just begun their university studies. Some have delayed or even forgone promising professions. Cars are sold, sweethearts are put on hold, college is delayed, scholarships are forfeited, careers are postponed. Behind each missionary is a private story of years

of personal commitment, preparation, personal sacrifice, and examples of love for the Savior. And there are those worthy young men and young women who have in their hearts the greatest desire to serve a mission, but because of physical, health, or other limiting circumstances are honorably excused.

A missionary's life is not an easy one. After preparing through childhood and teen years by studying the scriptures, preparing financially, and maintaining personal worthiness (including sexual purity and abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and drugs), missionaries enter one of several missionary training centers scattered throughout the world. This is the only formal training they will receive—three weeks if they are called to serve in a country of their native language, or two months if they must learn a foreign language. Their day in the mission field is demanding. It begins every morning at 6:30 A.M. with two hours of study, a dozen hours of hard and often discouraging work, continuing until bedtime—about 10:00 P.M. Their work consists mostly of proselyting and teaching but also includes a generous amount of time for voluntary community service. They can be seen teaching English in foreign lands, donating time in hospitals and retirement homes, serving meals at homeless shelters, or doing other service for the benefit of the community. They have part of one day a week for personal preparedness, letter writing, and some relaxation and recreation. Excluded from their mission are dating, secular music, beaches, swimming, and many other activities considered normal for young men and women of this age.

An opportunity to show love

Some outside our Church may feel that a mission is a great and unreasonable sacrifice. Our missionaries do not view it as a sacrifice. They view it as an opportunity to manifest their love to the

Savior, who charged, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). They see it as an opportunity to express their love to all mankind. They see it as an opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Redeemer of the world. They see it as an opportunity to build faith in Christ and to teach His saving and comforting doctrine. I see it as truly one of the distinguishing characteristics of true Christianity. I see these young missionaries as true Christian servants exemplifying the highest Christian principles by testifying of and serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

They just keep coming—today more than 50,000, tomorrow more than 60,000, and then 70,000 young men, young women, and couples serving all over the world. At a time when so many young men and women of this age are searching, wandering aimlessly, and struggling with the meaning and purpose of life, tens of thousands are fully devoted to this great cause of serving the Lord. They prepare, they sacrifice, and they come. They come because they believe in God, and they believe in the brotherhood of all mankind.

Why our missionaries serve

Some have questioned why our missionaries would be sent to all parts of the world, even among our fellow Christians. In the third chapter of John, verse 16, we read the familiar scripture, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Our missionaries go to all nations and all people because they have a firm, unshakable testimony that God still loves the world and that He has spoken again as an indication of that love. He has restored precious truths lost over the centuries of Christian persecution, dark ages, and years of confusion—truths that are essential to our peace and happiness.

These are truths so essential to our eternal salvation that our loving Father restored them in their completeness. After Christ's ministry and ascension to heaven, the Apostle Peter prophesied of a restitution of all things before Christ would return for His Second Coming. He said:

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

"Whom the heaven must receive *until the times of restitution of all things*" (Acts 3:20–21; italics added).

These missionaries go into all the world full of love and faith because they know of the fulfillment of Peter's prophecy of a restitution of all things. They testify of a restoration that is so marvelous that only the hand of God could be its author—so miraculous that it can be believed only if one understands the powers of God and His love for all mankind—a story so divine that the truth of it can be truly accepted only through the personal manifestation of the Holy Ghost, which the Savior promised as His way of testifying of the truth to those who prayerfully seek it.

What our missionaries will bring you

Our missionaries do not attempt to take away any precious truths, values, or principles that have led so many of you to a life of righteous service and devotion to the Savior. Rather, they come to your homes to present further evidence, additional scripture, that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, who indeed hung upon the cross and atoned for our sins. They bring a message of confirmation of His life and magnification of His goodness and love.

They will testify to you of a marvelous vision, considered miraculous in today's world of doubt, yet which would easily be accepted if it had occurred 2,000 years ago. These missionaries will explain how God and Christ appeared to a young boy only 14 years of age to commence this Restoration. They will tell

you about other heavenly messengers who have come to restore Christ's authority, doctrine, and teachings in their completeness and simplicity. They will tell you of events and truths so beautiful and wonderful, so marvelous that you will thrill as they unfold before you.

The missionaries will explain to you the very purpose of this life that we call mortality. They will help you understand where we came from, why we are here, and why it is necessary and even desirable to experience the vicissitudes of mortality, including suffering, pain, temptation, and death, as well as joy and happiness. They will explain how through Christ's teachings, one finds peace and direction in a sometimes troubled and turbulent world. Perhaps most important of all, they will explain God's view of the importance and sanctity of the family. To husbands and wives who love each other and who love their children, there will be a message of how you can have your families forever—eternally—beyond the grave. And finally, they will explain how you can gain your personal witness as to the truthfulness of these things.

Listen to the message and pray

And so, we do "care enough to send our very best." To all of you who are not of our faith, when two young men dressed in white shirts and ties, two lovely young women, or a noble couple knock at your door and introduce themselves as representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may I invite you to

let them in. Listen to their message and evaluate for yourself. May I suggest that you not just accept their message but that you inquire fervently of our Father in Heaven as to its truthfulness and its value to you and your family, for He is the author of all truth and has promised His witness to those who earnestly seek it.

I testify to you that the Spirit has borne witness to me that these things are true. The Spirit has borne witness to over 50,000 missionaries and 100,000 parents and thousands of family members who are sacrificing and giving their most precious gift of all to bring this message to you. We jointly testify that the Spirit will bear witness to you if you will receive the message and ask Heavenly Father for a personal confirmation of its truthfulness.

I add my solemn testimony to that of our missionaries, their parents, and millions of others who have received this same witness—that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ. He is our Savior, our Redeemer, and He loves us—every one of us—and He has restored His gospel in its fulness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Hallmark Cards, Inc.

President Hinckley

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The doctrine of eternal families

I wish to speak to all those who would like to know about eternal families and about families being forever. One year ago the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a proclamation to the world concerning the family. It summarizes eternal gospel principles that have been taught since the beginning of recorded history and even before the earth was created.

The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. The Apostle Paul taught that God is the father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9). From the proclamation we read, "In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life." The proclamation also reiterates to the world that "marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity:

"And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was" (Moses 5:59).

"And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and

they began to multiply and to replenish the earth" (Moses 5:2).

The Savior Himself spoke of this sacred marriage covenant and promise when He gave the authority to His disciples to bind in heaven sacred covenants made on earth:

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

In this latter day the promise of eternal families was restored in 1829 when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored to the earth. Seven years later, in the Kirtland Temple, the keys to perform the sealing ordinances were restored, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

"Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi. . . .

" . . . The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands" (D&C 110:13-14, 16).

With the restoration of these keys and priesthood authority comes the opportunity for all who are worthy to receive the blessings of eternal families. "Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house" (D&C 110:9).

Promises and requirements of sealings

What is the promise of these sealings which are performed in the temples? The Lord outlines the promise and requirements in this sacred verse:

"And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life . . . and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

As taught in this scripture, an eternal bond doesn't just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. The family relationships we have here on this earth are important, but they are much more important for their effect on our families for generations in mortality and throughout all eternity.

Love spouse above all others

By divine commandment, spouses are required to love each other above all others. The Lord clearly declares, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). The proclamation states:

"By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide

the necessities of life and protection for their families [see D&C 83:2–4; 1 Timothy 5:8]. [By divine design,] mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." By divine design, husband and wife are equal partners in their marriage and parental responsibilities. By direct commandment of God, "parents have a sacred duty . . . to teach [their children] *to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens* [in the countries where they reside]" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; italics added; see Mosiah 4:14–15; D&C 68:25–28).

Satan's efforts to destroy the family

Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness, Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the roles of men and women, encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.

So fundamental is the family unit to the plan of salvation that God has declared a warning that those "individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God [their maker]. The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Save families, not just ourselves

While our individual salvation is based on our individual obedience, it is equally important that we understand that we are each an important and integral part of a family and that the highest blessings can be received only within an eternal family. When families are func-

tioning as designed by God, the relationships found therein are the most valued of mortality. The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being one in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, "Where is the rest of the family?" This is why we teach that families are forever. The eternal nature of an individual becomes the eternal nature of the family.

Families prepare us for eternal life

The eternal nature of our body and our spirit is a question often pondered by those who live in mortality. All people who will ever live on earth are members of a human family and are eternal children of God, our loving Heavenly Father. After birth and tasting of death in mortality, all will be resurrected because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father. Depending on our individual obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of God, each mortal can have the blessing of attaining eternal life; that is, returning to live in the presence of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, having eternal increase for all the eternities to come. Through making and keeping the sacred covenants found in the temple ordinances, individuals can return to the presence of God and will be reunited with their families eternally.

The home is where we are nurtured and where we prepare ourselves for living in mortality. It is also where we prepare ourselves for death and for immortality because of our belief and understanding

that there is life after death, not only for the individual but also for the family.

Faith of a friend with a terminal illness

Some of the greatest lessons of gospel principles about the eternal nature of the family are learned as we observe how members of the Church, when faced with adversity, apply gospel principles in their lives and in their homes. In the past year I have witnessed the blessings of joy which come to those who honor and revere the gospel teaching of the eternal family during times of adversity in their lives.

A few months ago I had the opportunity of visiting a man who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. As a devoted priesthood holder, he was confronted with the realities of mortality. He found strength, however, in the example of the Savior, who said, in the Lord's Prayer, "After this manner therefore pray ye: . . . Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). My friend took courage in knowing that as Jesus was required to endure great pain and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane while completing the atoning sacrifice, He uttered the words, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42).

My friend came to accept the phrase "Thy will be done" as he faced his own poignant trials and tribulations. As a faithful member of the Church, he was now confronted with some sobering concerns. Particularly touching were his questions, "Have I done all that I need to do to faithfully endure to the end?" "What will death be like?" "Will my family be prepared to stand in faith and be self-reliant when I am gone?"

We had the opportunity to discuss all three questions. They are clearly answered in the doctrine taught to us by our Savior. We discussed how he had

spent his life striving to be faithful, to do what God asked of him, to be honest in his dealings with his fellowmen and all others, to care for and love his family. Isn't that what is meant by enduring to the end? We talked about what happens immediately after death, about what God has taught us about the world of spirits. It is a place of paradise and happiness for those who have lived righteous lives. It is not something to fear.

After our conversation, he called together his wife and the extended family—children and grandchildren—to teach them again the doctrine of the Atonement that all will be resurrected. Everyone came to understand that just as the Lord has said, while there will be mourning at the temporary separation, there is no sorrow for those who die in the Lord (see Revelation 14:13; D&C 42:46). His blessing promised him comfort and reassurance that all would be well, that he would not have pain, that he would have additional time to prepare his family for his departure, and even that he would know the time of his departure. The family related to me that on the night before he passed away, he said he would go on the morrow. He passed away the next afternoon at peace, with all his family at his side. This is the solace and comfort that comes to us when we understand the gospel plan and know that families are forever.

Gospel doctrines comfort a young widow

Contrast these events with an incident which happened to me when I was a young man in my early twenties. While serving in the Air Force, one of the pilots in my squadron crashed on a training mission and was killed. I was assigned to accompany my fallen comrade on his final journey home to be buried in Brooklyn. I had the honor of standing by his family during the viewing and funeral services and of representing our govern-

ment in presenting the flag to his grieving widow at the graveside. The funeral service was dark and dismal. No mention was made of his goodness or his accomplishments. His name was never mentioned. At the conclusion of the services, his widow turned to me and asked, "Bob, what is really going to happen to Don?" I was then able to give her the sweet doctrine of the Resurrection and the reality that, if baptized and sealed in the temple for time and all eternity, they could be together eternally. The clergyman standing next to her said, "That is the most beautiful doctrine I have ever heard."

The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressful times of mortality. It brings light where there is darkness and a calming influence where there is turmoil. It gives eternal hope where there is mortal despair. It is more than just beautiful doctrine. It is a reality in our lives that if we can be obedient and obtain the eternal rewards that God grants us, if we will draw nigh unto Him and embrace the eternal doctrine, we will be blessed.

A dying man has faith in eternal families

Another incident that has touched my life recently happened when a young man with a terminal illness passed away. He knew that his illness would first take away his manual dexterity and his ability to walk, then its progression would take his ability to speak, and finally his respiratory system would cease to function. But he also had faith that families are forever. With this knowledge, he spoke to each of his children through video recordings for use when he was gone. He produced recordings to be given to his sons and daughters at important, sacred occasions in their lives, such as baptisms, priesthood ordinations, and weddings. He spoke to them with the tender love of a father who knew that while his family was forever, for a time he would not

physically be able to be with them, but spiritually he would never leave their side.

The examples of faith shown by steadfast widows and widowers, along with that of their children, after the passing of a spouse or parent are an inspiration to all of us. Great lessons can be learned as we observe their faith and obedience as they strive to remain faithful so that they can once again be together as families through eternity.

The gospel brings light and hope

The knowledge and understanding of the doctrine that God lives and Jesus is the Christ and that we have an opportunity to be resurrected and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, make it possible to endure otherwise tragic events. This doctrine brings a brightness of hope into an otherwise dark and dreary world. It answers the simple questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. These are truths that must be taught and practiced in our homes.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Through His Atonement we will all have the opportunity of being resurrected.

This is not just an individual blessing; it is much more than that. It is a blessing to each one of us and to our families. That we may be eternally grateful, that we can live in the presence of God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ, that we may be together in the eternities to come, that we might understand the joy, and that we not only teach this doctrine but live true to it in our lives and in our families, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Following my remarks, the choir will sing "Lead, Kindly Light," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Women are essential to God's plan

Half, possibly more than half, of the adult members of the Church are women. It is to them that I wish particularly to speak this morning. I do so with the hope that the men will also hear.

First let me say to you sisters that you do not hold a second place in our Father's plan for the eternal happiness and well-being of His children. You are an absolutely essential part of that plan.

Without you the plan could not function. Without you the entire program

would be frustrated. As I have said before from this pulpit, when the process of creation occurred, Jehovah, the Creator, under instruction from His Father, first divided the light from the darkness and then separated the land from the waters. There followed the creation of plant life, followed by the creation of animal life. Then came the creation of man, and culminating that act of divinity came the crowning act, the creation of woman.

Each of you is a daughter of God, endowed with a divine birthright. You need no defense of that position.

Great strength in women of the Church

As I go about from place to place, I am interviewed by representatives of the media. Invariably they ask about the place of women in the Church. They do so in an almost accusatory tone, as if we denigrate and demean women. I invariably reply that I know of no other organization in all the world which affords women so many opportunities for development, for sociality, for the accomplishment of great good, for holding positions of leadership and responsibility.

I wish all of these reporters could have been in the Tabernacle a week ago Saturday when the general Relief Society meeting was held. It was an inspiration to look into the faces of that vast gathering of the daughters of God, women of faith and ability, women who know what life is about and have something of a sense of the divinity of their creation. I wish they could have heard that great chorus of young women from Brigham Young University, who touched our hearts with the beauty of their singing. I wish they could have heard the stirring messages of the Relief Society general presidency, each of whom spoke on a phase of the subject faith, hope, and charity.

What able people these women are. They express themselves with power and conviction and great persuasiveness. President Faust concluded that service with a wonderful talk.

If those reporters who are prone to raise this question could have sat in that vast congregation, they would have known, even without further inquiry, that there is strength and great capacity in the women of this Church. There is leadership and direction, a certain spirit of independence, and yet great satisfaction in being a part of this, the Lord's kingdom, and of working hand in hand with the priesthood to move it forward.

The real builders of the nation

Many of you are here today who were in that meeting. Today you are seated with your husbands, men whom you love and honor and respect, and who in turn love and honor and respect you. You know how fortunate you are to be married to a good man who is your companion in life and who will be your companion throughout eternity. Together, as you have served in many capacities and reared your families and provided for them, you have faced a variety of storms and come through them all with your heads held high. Most of you are mothers, and very many of you are grandmothers and even great-grandmothers. You have walked the sometimes painful, sometimes joyous path of parenthood. You have walked hand in hand with God in the great process of bringing children into the world that they might experience this estate along the road of immortality and eternal life. It has not been easy rearing a family. Most of you have had to sacrifice and skimp and labor night and day. As I think of you and your circumstances, I think of the words of Anne Campbell, who wrote as she looked upon her children:

You are the trip I did not take;
You are the pearls I cannot buy;
You are my blue Italian lake;
You are my piece of foreign sky.
["To My Child," quoted in Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* (1965), 54]

You sisters are the real builders of the nation wherever you live, for you have created homes of strength and peace and security. These become the very sinew of any nation.

Rebuke to abusers

Unfortunately a few of you may be married to men who are abusive. Some

of them put on a fine face before the world during the day and come home in the evening, set aside their self-discipline, and on the slightest provocation fly into outbursts of anger.

No man who engages in such evil and unbecoming behavior is worthy of the priesthood of God. No man who so conducts himself is worthy of the privileges of the house of the Lord. I regret that there are some men undeserving of the love of their wives and children. There are children who fear their fathers, and wives who fear their husbands. If there be any such men within the hearing of my voice, as a servant of the Lord I rebuke you and call you to repentance. Discipline yourselves. Master your temper. Most of the things that make you angry are of very small consequence. And what a terrible price you are paying for your anger. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask your wife to forgive you. Apologize to your children.

Advice to single women

There are many women among us who are single. Generally this is not of their own choice. Some have never had the opportunity to marry one with whom they would wish to spend eternity.

To you single women who wish to be married, I repeat what I recently said in a meeting for singles in this Tabernacle:

"Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it. The chances are that if you forget about it and become anxiously engaged in other activities, the prospects will brighten immeasurably. . . .

"I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work, service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than are yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a

little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and happiness" (Salt Lake Valley single adult fireside, 22 Sept. 1996).

Assist women who have lost husbands

Included among the women of the Church are those who have lost their husbands through abandonment, divorce, and death. Great is our obligation to you. As the scriptures declare, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

I received a letter from one who counts herself fortunate, and indeed fortunate she is. She writes:

"Although I have been raising our four boys as a single parent, . . . I am not alone. I have a wonderful 'ward family' that has rallied around us. . . .

"My Relief Society president has been there for me through my greatest hardships, encouraging my spiritual growth, personal prayer, and temple attendance.

"Our bishop has been generous in providing needed food and clothing and has helped send two of the boys to camp. He has had interviews with all of us and given each of us blessings and needed encouragement. He has helped me to budget and do what I can to help my family.

"Our home teachers have come regularly and even gave the boys blessings as they started the new school year.

"Our stake president and his counselors have checked in on us on a regular basis by taking time to visit with us at church, on the phone, or in our home.

"This Church is true, and my boys and I are living proof that God loves us

and that a 'ward family' can make all the difference.

"Our priesthood leaders have been instrumental in keeping the boys active in church and in the Scouting program. [One] is an Eagle Scout and is receiving his fourth palm this week. [Another] is an Eagle with three palms. And [a third] has just turned in his Eagle papers this week. The youngest is a Webelos and loves Cub Scouts.

"We are always met with loving hearts and warm handshakes. The Christ-like attitude of the stake and our ward has helped us through trials we never imagined possible.

"Life has been hard, . . . but we put on the whole armor of God as we kneel in family prayer . . . , asking for help and guidance and sharing thanks for the blessings we have received. I pray daily for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost to guide me as I raise these boys to be missionaries and encourage them to be true to the gospel and the priesthood they hold.

"I am proud to say I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know this Church is true. I sustain my Church leaders. We are doing well, and I thank everyone for their love and prayers and acceptance."

What a great letter that is! How much it says about the way this Church functions and should function throughout the world. I hope that every woman who finds herself in the kind of circumstances in which this woman lives is similarly blessed with an understanding and helpful bishop, with a Relief Society president who knows how to assist her, with home teachers who know where their duty lies and how to fulfill it, and with a host of ward members who are helpful without being intrusive.

I have never met the woman whose letter I have read. Notwithstanding the cheerful attitude she conveys, I am sure there has been much of struggle and

loneliness and, at times, fear. I notice that she works to provide for her needs and the needs of her boys, who are in their teens. I assume her income is inadequate, because she indicates that the bishop has helped them with food and clothing.

Advice on employment outside the home

Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.

Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children. Each of you has a bishop who will counsel with you and assist you. If you feel you need to speak with an understanding woman, do not hesitate to get in touch with your Relief Society president.

To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children

in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them.

Advice to single parents

For you who are single parents, I say that many hands stand ready to help you. The Lord is not unmindful of you. Neither is His Church.

May He bless you, my beloved sisters who find yourselves in the situation of single parenthood. May you have health, strength, vitality to carry the heavy burden that is yours. May you have loving friends and associates to bear you up in your times of trial. You know the power of prayer as perhaps few others do. Many of you spend much time on your knees speaking with your Father in Heaven, with tears running down your cheeks. Please know that we also pray for you.

With all that you have to do, you are also asked to serve in the Church. Your bishop will not ask you to do anything that is beyond your capacity. And as you so serve, a new dimension will be added to your life. You will find new and stimulating associations. You will find friendship and sociality. You will grow in knowledge and understanding and wisdom and in your capacity to do. You will become a better mother because of the service you give in the work of the Lord.

To older women

Now in conclusion I wish to say a word to you older women, many of whom are widows. You are a great treasure. You have passed through the storms of life. You have weathered the challenges now facing your younger sisters. You are mature in wisdom, in understanding, in compassion, in love and service.

There is a certain beauty that shines through your countenances. It is the beauty that comes of peace. There may

still be struggle, but there is mature wisdom to meet it. There are health problems, but there is a certain composure concerning them. The bad memories of the past have largely been forgotten, while the good memories return and bring sweet and satisfying enrichment to life.

You have learned to love the scriptures, and you read them. Your prayers for the most part are prayers of thanksgiving. Your greetings are words of kindness. Your friendship is a sturdy staff on which others may lean.

What a resource are the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You love this Church; you accept its doctrine; you honor your place in its organization; you bring luster and strength and beauty to its congregations. How thankful we are to you. How much you are loved, respected, and honored.

I salute my own beloved companion. It will soon be 60 years ago that we walked from the Salt Lake Temple as husband and wife, with love for one another. That love has strengthened through all of these years. We have faced many problems during our years of marriage. Somehow, with the blessing of the Lord, we have survived them all.

It is becoming physically harder to stand tall and straight as we did in our younger years. No matter—we still have one another and we still stand together, even though we lean a little. And when the time for separation comes, there will be much of sorrow, but there will also be the comfort that will come from the assurance that she is mine and I am hers for the eternity that lies ahead.

Appreciation for sisters

And so, my beloved sisters, please know how much we appreciate you. You bring a measure of wholeness to us. You have great strength. With dignity and tremendous ability, you carry forward the

remarkable programs of the Relief Society, the Young Women, and the Primary. You teach Sunday School. We walk at your side as your companions and your brethren with respect and love, with honor and great admiration. It was the Lord who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood. It was He who has given you your capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God. I bear testimony

before the entire world of your worth, of your grace and goodness, of your remarkable abilities and tremendous contributions, and I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."
Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1996. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good afternoon. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Robert D. Hales, J. Richard Clarke, and F. Melvin Hammond are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, Gary J. Coleman, and D. Todd Christofferson are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "How Wondrous and Great." The invocation will be offered by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

The choir sang "How Wondrous and Great."

Elder Sheldon F. Child offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Sabbath Day." Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker at this session.

The choir sang "Sabbath Day."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Christians in belief and action

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a privilege for me to speak to you this afternoon, and I pray for that same Spirit that we've enjoyed so much during this conference.

Some people erroneously believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members are not Christian. We have difficulty understanding why anyone could accept and promote an idea that is so far from the truth. President Gordon B. Hinckley has described Church members as a people "bound [together] by a common love for our Master, who is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. We are a covenant people who have taken upon ourselves His holy name."¹

Our beliefs and actions may differ from those of others, but we, as good Christians, do not criticize other religions or their adherents. "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, *let them worship how, where, or what they may.*"²

A dictionary defines a Christian as "one who professes *belief* in Jesus as the Christ or follows the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus" and "one who *lives* according to the teachings of Jesus."³ Thus two characteristics identify Christians: (1) they profess *belief* in the Savior, and (2) they *act* in harmony with the Savior's teachings. Faithful members of the Church, called Saints or Latter-day Saints, qualify clearly in both characteristics. In our belief and our action, we demonstrate that "Jesus Christ himself [is] the chief corner stone" of our faith.⁴

Christians in belief

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears His name. He stands at

its head and directs it through His chosen prophets.

We believe the *first principle of the gospel* is "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵ "No [one] cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]."⁶ As His disciples, we echo boldly the words of Peter's resounding testimony to our Master: "Thou art the Christ."⁷ The burning witness of the Holy Spirit that we feel deep within our hearts prompts us to make this declaration humbly and gratefully. When we explain our regard for Jesus, we lovingly and plainly testify that He is "that Christ, the Son of the living God."⁸

We rejoice in our sure knowledge that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."⁹ With obedient hearts and eyes of faith, "we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God."¹⁰

We declare that Jesus is the First-born Son of our Heavenly Father in the spirit and the Only Begotten Son of God in mortality. He is a God, one of the three in the Godhead. He is the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. In a premortal council at which we were all present, He accepted our Father's great plan of happiness for His children and was chosen by the Father to give effect to that plan. He led the forces of good against those of Satan and his followers in a battle for the souls of men that began before this world was formed. That conflict continues today. We were all on the side of Jesus then. We are on the side of Jesus today.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ, an act of pure love, overcame the effects of the Fall and provided the way for all mankind to return to the presence of God. As part of the Atonement, the Savior overcame physical death and provided immortality for every one of God's

children through the Resurrection. He also overcame spiritual death and provided the possibility of eternal life, the life that God lives and the greatest of all the gifts of God. This He did by taking upon Himself the suffering for the sins of all humankind.

Under the direction of His Father, He created this world and many others. He came to this earth as the Son of God, the Eternal Father, and the mortal virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life. He had a greater effect upon the people of this world than any other who has ever lived or will live upon it. He "stands first, foremost, and alone, as a directing personality in the world's progression."¹¹ He was crucified and resurrected and ascended to His Father in Heaven. After His Resurrection, He ministered to people who lived in the Western Hemisphere.

After the great Apostasy, He initiated the Restoration of the gospel on a spring day in 1820 when He and His Father visited young Joseph Smith. The Lord directed the organization of His restored Church on 6 April 1830.

He will return in glory to reign in righteousness for 1,000 years, after which He will deliver the kingdom to His Father.¹²

Belief based on scriptures and revelation

We base our belief and conviction of the divine nature and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ on the holy scriptures and on continuing revelation to latter-day prophets.

"We believe the Bible to be the word of God."¹³ We delight in the knowledge of the Lord that we find recorded in the Old and New Testaments. We know that Jehovah of the Old Testament and Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same. We are grateful that this sacred record of God's dealings with the people of ancient Israel and of His mortal ministry has been preserved and passed to us

to enlighten our minds and strengthen our spirits. The fragmentary nature of the biblical record and the errors in it, resulting from multiple transcriptions, translations, and interpretations, do not diminish our belief in it as the word of God "as far as it is translated correctly."¹⁴ We read and study the Bible, we teach and preach from it, and we strive to live according to the eternal truths it contains. We love this collection of holy writ.

"We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."¹⁵ It is another testament of Jesus Christ, written "by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation . . . to the convincing of [all people] that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."¹⁶ God brought forth the Book of Mormon as a second witness that corroborates and strengthens the Bible's testimony of the Savior. The Book of Mormon does not supplant the Bible. It expands, extends, clarifies, and amplifies our knowledge of the Savior. Surely this second witness should be cause for great rejoicing by all Christians.

We invite our friends who are not of our faith to read the Book of Mormon and ponder its content prayerfully. To them we offer this scriptural promise: "And now, my beloved brethren, . . . and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good."¹⁷

Latter-day Saints "believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."¹⁸ We feel blessed to know that God speaks to His children, as He has throughout the ages, through living prophets.¹⁹

God called, prepared, and sustained Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration. Prophets have no other purpose, no other mission except to serve God. Of his own sacred responsibility and holy calling, our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said: "I have no desire other than to do that which the Lord would have done. I am His servant, called to serve His people. This is His Church. We are only custodians of that which belongs to Him."²⁰

The Doctrine and Covenants also contains revelations in which "one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of all the holy prophets since the world began."²¹

This book of revelations is "of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth" because of "the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power."²²

The Pearl of Great Price provides the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the central figure in every dispensation from Adam to Joseph Smith and including President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Christians in action

To repeat, by definition a Christian not only professes *belief* in the Savior, but a Christian *lives and acts* according to the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ. He taught, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father."²³ Jesus also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."²⁴ He commanded us to pattern our lives after His.²⁵ True disciples of the Lord must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."²⁶

Our faith in the Lord moves us to the *second principle of the gospel*: repen-

tance.²⁷ We develop a desire to purify and sanctify ourselves so that we might be worthy to return to God's presence. We learn of the great plan of happiness that our Father has designed for His children, and we seek the blessings of peace and joy that are linked irrevocably to obedience to the laws of God.²⁸ Through the marvelous power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a power activated by our obedience to His commandments, we can be washed clean of our sins. His infinite "mercy can satisfy the demands of justice"²⁹ for everyone who will repent. One of the great truths restored to the earth through modern revelation is that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is universal! The saving power of the gospel spans all generations of time and extends to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples. Through humble repentance, we offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit that the Lord requires of us before we can enter the waters of baptism.³⁰

Our faith in the Lord moves us to the *third principle of the gospel*, which is "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins" by one who has priesthood authority.³¹ The Savior commanded that we all must be born again: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."³² Latter-day Saints accept baptism as an essential saving ordinance that is required of all people. Through baptism we covenant to take upon us the Lord's name and honor it by keeping His commandments. He, in turn, promises us the guiding and enlightening presence of His Spirit. The *fourth principle of the gospel* is the "laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."³³

Covenant to obey the commandments

As we take His name upon us, we most certainly are Christians, for we bear the name of Christ. Each week as we partake of the emblems of bread and water,

we do it in remembrance of Him. We renew our covenant that we "are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son [of God], and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]." ³⁴

Through faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are born anew. We experience "a mighty change . . . in our hearts" ³⁵ and become "quickened in the inner man." ³⁶ If we are faithful and obedient, this mighty change will cause that "we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." ³⁷

By obeying God's commands, we deny ourselves of all ungodliness. Through obedience motivated by a wholehearted love of God, we come fully unto Christ and allow His grace, through the Atonement, to lead us into perfection. ³⁸

Latter-day Saints covenant to keep the Lord's commandments. Though we may fall short, our hearts are committed to striving earnestly to be obedient. We follow the teachings of the Savior. We try always to go the extra mile, to fast, to pray for our enemies, to care for the poor, and to do our acts of charity in private. We try to follow the example He gave in the parable of the good Samaritan. We avoid profanity. We avoid finding fault. We keep the Sabbath day holy and strive to be reconciled to our brother. With patience and forgiveness we try to turn the other cheek, knowing that we will be judged as we judge others. We are aware of the dangers of materialism and debt. We seek to put the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in our lives because we know that our hearts will follow what we treasure. We know that the gate is strait and the way is narrow, so we labor to develop self-discipline to follow in His footsteps.

We love our neighbors. We strive to treat others with courtesy and respect, to treat them as we would want to be treated, both in public settings and in our

homes. We strive to show concern for others and courtesy in all that we do—even as we drive in a traffic jam. We know that "out of small things proceedeth that which is great." ³⁹ Because we find joy in what we know and in how we live, we like to share the gospel with others.

"The author and finisher of our faith"

Can anyone doubt that Latter-day Saints profess a profound belief in Jesus Christ or doubt that we follow a religion based on the life and teachings of the Savior? He is, without question, "the author and finisher of our faith." ⁴⁰ President Hinckley gave this powerful testimony of our Redeemer:

"Towering above all mankind stands Jesus the Christ, the King of glory, the unblemished Messiah, the Lord Emmanuel. . . .

"He is our King, our Lord, our Master, the living Christ, who stands on the right hand of His Father. He lives! He lives, resplendent and wonderful, the living Son of the living God." ⁴¹

I add my personal testimony to others you have heard. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, our Mediator with the Father, and our perfect example. I love Him and serve Him and seek only to do His will. God lives, and He loves His children. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's chosen prophet today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65.
2. Articles of Faith 1:11; italics added.
3. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1992), "Christian," 340; italics added.
4. Ephesians 2:20.
5. Articles of Faith 1:4.
6. John 14:6.

7. Mark 8:29.
8. John 6:69.
9. Acts 4:12.
10. Helaman 3:28.
11. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 2.
12. See Revelation 20:6; Doctrine and Covenants 76:107–9.
13. Articles of Faith 1:8.
14. Articles of Faith 1:8.
15. Articles of Faith 1:8.
16. Title page, Book of Mormon.
17. 2 Nephi 33:10; see also Moroni 7:16.
18. Articles of Faith 1:9.
19. See Amos 3:7; Ephesians 4:11–14.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65.
21. Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
22. Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
23. Matthew 7:21; italics added.
24. John 14:15; Doctrine and Covenants 124:87.
25. See 3 Nephi 12:48; Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 27:27.
26. James 1:22.
27. See Articles of Faith 1:4.
28. See Alma 12:32–34; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
29. Alma 34:16; see also Mosiah 15:9; Alma 42.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
31. Articles of Faith 1:4.
32. John 3:5.
33. Articles of Faith 1:4; see also 1:5.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
35. Mosiah 5:2; see also Alma 5:12–14.
36. Moses 6:65.
37. Mosiah 5:2.
38. See Moroni 10:32.
39. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
40. Hebrews 12:2.
41. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 92; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 67.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society.

Elder Richard G. Scott

God's great plan of happiness

The scriptures record, "And I, God, created man . . . ; male and female created I them."¹ This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. You elected to have this earth experience as part of His plan for you. The prophets call it "the plan of mercy,"² the "eternal plan of deliverance,"³ "the plan of salvation,"⁴ and, yes, "the great plan of happiness."⁵ You were taught this plan before you came to earth and there rejoiced in the privilege of participating in it.

Obedience to the plan is a requisite for full happiness in this life and a continuation of eternal joy beyond the veil. Essential to His plan of happiness is agency—the right of personal choice. Also fundamental is the holy privilege of procreation to be exercised within the commitment of legal marriage. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. The family is ordained of God.⁶ As husband and wife, you have the responsibility to bear children and to nurture and train them spiritually, emotionally, and physically.⁷

Satan also has a plan. It is a cunning, evil, subtle plan of destruction.⁸ It is his

objective to take captive the children of Father in Heaven and with every possible means frustrate the great plan of happiness.

Importance of marriage in God's plan

Our Heavenly Father endowed His sons and daughters with unique traits especially fitted for their individual responsibilities as they fulfill His plan. To follow His plan requires that you do those things He expects of you as a son or daughter, husband or wife. Those roles are different but entirely compatible. In the Lord's plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. Indeed, a husband and wife are not two identical halves, but a wondrous, divinely determined combination of complementary capacities and characteristics.

Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan.

Learn from the lives of Adam and Eve

You can learn how to be more effective parents by studying the lives of Adam and Eve. Adam was Michael who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner. After they had partaken of the fruit, the Lord spoke with them. Their comments reveal some

different characteristics of a man and woman. To Adam He said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"⁹ Now, Adam's response was characteristic of a man who wants to be perceived as being as close to right as possible. Adam responded, "The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat."¹⁰ And the Lord said unto Eve, "What is this thing which thou hast done?"¹¹ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. Her answer was very simple and straightforward: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."¹²

Later, "Adam blessed God . . . and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy, and again in the flesh *I* shall see God."¹³ Adam was thinking about his responsibilities. He was trying to align his performance with the desires of the Lord. Eve said, "Were it not for *our* transgression *we* never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of *our* redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto *all* the obedient."¹⁴ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. She embraced all, wanted to make sure that everyone was considered. One response was not more correct than the other. The two perspectives resulted from the traits inherent in men and women. The Lord intends that we use those differences to fulfill His plan for happiness, personal growth, and development. By counseling together they arrived at a broader, more correct understanding of truth.

They worked together.¹⁵ They obeyed the commandment to have children.¹⁶ They knew the plan of happiness and followed it, even though at times it resulted in hardship and difficulty for them.

They were commanded, "Thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."¹⁷ And they did. Further, they taught their children the plan of happiness.¹⁸ They worked together to overcome challenges,¹⁹ and they "ceased not to call upon God."²⁰

Because Adam and Eve were obedient, the Holy Ghost led them. As husband and wife, you can receive direction in your lives by qualifying for the gift of the Holy Ghost through obedience to the teachings of the Savior.

Roles of wife and mother

Beware of the subtle ways Satan employs to take you from the plan of God²¹ and true happiness. One of Satan's most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home. This is an attack at the very heart of God's plan to foster love between husband and wife and to nurture children in an atmosphere of understanding, peace, appreciation, and support. Much of the violence that is rampant in the world today is the harvest of weakened homes. Government and social plans will not effectively correct that, nor can the best efforts of schools and churches fully compensate for the absence of the tender care of a compassionate mother and wife in the home.

This morning President Hinckley spoke of the importance of a mother in the home. Study his message. As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.

Of course, as a woman you can do exceptionally well in the workplace, but is that the best use of your divinely ap-

pointed talents and feminine traits? As a husband, don't encourage your wife to go to work to help in your divinely appointed responsibility of providing resources for the family, if you can possibly avoid it. As the prophets have counseled, to the extent possible with the help of the Lord, as parents, work together to keep Mother in the home.²² Your presence there will strengthen the self-confidence of your children and decrease the chance of emotional challenges. Moreover, as you teach truth by word and example, those children will come to understand who they are and what they can obtain as divine children of Father in Heaven.

Blessings to be given in the Lord's time

I know I have been speaking of the ideal, and you may be disturbed because your life may not now fit that mold. I promise you that through your obedience and continuing faith in Jesus Christ and your understanding of the whole plan of happiness, even if important parts of it aren't fulfilled in your life now, they will be yours in the Lord's due time. I also promise you that you can have significant growth and happiness now in your present circumstances. As a daughter or son of God, live whatever portion of the plan you can to the best of your ability.

Your desire to be a wife and mother may not have its total fulfillment here, but it will in His time as you live in faith and obedience to merit it.²³ Don't be lured away from the plan of our God²⁴ to the ways of the world, where motherhood is belittled, femininity is decried, and the divinely established role of wife and mother is mocked. Let the world go its way. You follow the plan of the Lord for the greatest measure of true, eternal achievement and the fullest happiness. The lack of promised blessings for which you qualify will be fully rectified in this life or in the next.²⁵

Gratitude for what women are and do

I often interview strong priesthood leaders. When these men speak of their wives, it is with deep tenderness and obvious appreciation. Often, tears flow. Their comments include, "She is more spiritual, purer, and more committed than I," "She motivates me to be a better person," "She is the strength of my life," and "I couldn't do it without her." As a woman, please don't judge how worthwhile, needed, and loved you are by our inept ability to express our true feelings. Your divinely conferred trait of giving of self without counting the cost leads you to underestimate your own worth.

I humbly thank our Father in Heaven for His daughters, you who were willing to come to earth to live under such uncertain circumstances. Most men could not handle the uncertainties you are asked to live with. Social customs require that you wait to be asked for marriage. You are expected to go with your husband wherever his employment or call takes him. Your environment and neighborhood are determined by his ability to provide, meager or not. You place your life in the Lord's hands each time you bear a child. Men make no such sacrifice. The blessing of nurturing children and caring for a husband often is intermingled with many routine tasks. But you do all of these things willingly because you are a woman. Generally you have no idea of how truly wonderful and capable you are, how very much appreciated and loved, or how desperately needed, for most men don't tell you as completely and as often as needed.

How to attain happiness

How can you receive the greatest happiness and blessings from this earth experience?

- Learn the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of happiness by studying

the scriptures, pondering their content, and praying to understand them. Carefully study and use the proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve on the family.²⁶ It was inspired of the Lord.

- Listen to the voice of current and past prophets. Their declarations are inspired. You may verify that counsel in your own mind and heart by praying about it as it applies to your special circumstances. Ask the Lord to confirm your choices, and accept accountability for them.

- Obey the inner feelings that come as promptings from the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are engendered by your righteous thoughts and acts and your determination to seek the will of the Lord and to live it.

- When needed, seek counsel and guidance from parents and your priesthood leaders.

A choice mother wrote: "How did the pioneer women . . . respond to the challenges of their day? They *listened* to their prophet's voice and *followed* him because they *knew* he spoke the will of the Lord. They met the challenges and reaped great blessings because of their faith and obedience. Their first priorities were not security, nice homes, or an easy life. . . . No sacrifice was too great for them to make for their precious husbands and children."²⁷

I obviously don't know what it feels like to be a woman, but I do know what it is to love one with all of my heart and soul. I constantly express to the Lord overflowing gratitude for the unending blessings that flow to our children and so abundantly to me from the life of one of His precious daughters. I want the happiness we have found together to be yours. The more closely you personally adhere to His plan for you on earth, the greater will be your happiness, fulfillment, and progress; the more qualified you will be to receive the rewards He has

promised for obedience. I so testify, for the Savior lives and He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 2:27. See also Moses 2:28; 3:5; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:303; James E. Talmage, *Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, 539.
2. Alma 42:15.
3. 2 Nephi 11:5.
4. Moses 6:62.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. See 2 Nephi 9:8–9; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:12, 23.
9. Moses 4:17.
10. Moses 4:18.
11. Moses 4:19.
12. Moses 4:19.
13. Moses 5:10; italics added.
14. Moses 5:11; italics added.
15. See Moses 5:1.
16. See Moses 5:2.
17. Moses 5:8.
18. See Moses 5:12.
19. See Moses 5:13.
20. Moses 5:16.
21. 2 Nephi 9:13.
22. See Spencer W. Kimball, *San Antonio fireside*, 3 Dec. 1977, 32.
23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1991, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.
24. See 2 Nephi 9:13.
25. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
26. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
27. Jeanene W. Scott, *BYU Women's Conference*, 6 Apr. 1989, 1.

Sister Elaine L. Jack

The Saints in flooded Mistolar

On the plains of Paraguay sits the tiny village of Mistolar. It is located on a large stretch of land in a desolate area near the Pilcomayo River. There in this small farming community is a branch of the Church. In June of 1987, with the melting snows of the Andes, the river which was their lifeline for crops was also the source of their destruction. It overflowed its banks not once but twice, forcing the Saints to relocate and then relocate again. They lost everything: their chapel, their homes, their gardens and fences. For a month they waded in knee-deep water simply trying to stay alive.

The Area Presidency, hearing of their plight, dispatched supplies, and Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Quorum of

Seventy led the rescue party in a grueling two-day journey.

When the group arrived, they were warmly welcomed by the women and children because the men, for the most part, were away hunting and fishing. The people had little food and clothing to sustain them in that freezing winter weather, and their surviving livestock included three sheep, a few chickens, a goat, and a scrawny dog. At night their makeshift reed-and-stick homes offered very little protection.

Clearly their situation was bleak, yet the villagers were smiling. Their peace was a stark contrast to their destitute circumstances.

How were they sustaining their spirits under such difficulties? The answer came when Elder Brewerton asked the

young branch president, "Do you have any sick among your members?"

The young priesthood leader paused and said, "I don't think so; let me ask the other brethren." A few minutes later he answered, "There are 39 of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. We watch over and bless our people."

That evening at the branch meeting a sister offered a prayer, one Elder Brewerton will always remember. She said, "Father, we have lost our beautiful chapel, we have lost our clothing, we no longer have homes, . . . we don't have any materials to build anything, we have to walk ten kilometers to get a drink of dirty river water and don't have a bucket. But we desire to express to thee our gratitude for our good health, for our happiness, and for our Church membership. Father, we want thee to know that under any conditions, we will be true, strong, and faithful to the covenants we made to thee when we were baptized" (in Heidi S. Swinton, *Pioneer Spirit* [1996], 10; see 8–11).

When all around them had washed away, the Saints in Mistolar held firmly to the power of the priesthood and its spiritual blessings (see D&C 107:18). I can picture that Relief Society sister standing up to thank the Lord in prayer for all they had. They had practically nothing—not even a bucket. But they had their covenants; they had their Church membership, their commitment to Christ. They were blessed to become "partakers of the glories." In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "Blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might . . . be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days" (D&C 66:2).

The priesthood is God's power

I have a firm testimony of the power of the priesthood in the lives of all Church members. In the Doctrine and

Covenants we are also told that the Melchizedek Priesthood holds "the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church" (D&C 107:18). I know it is God's power and authority on earth to bless our lives and help us bridge our earthly experiences to the eternities. When we receive the blessings of the priesthood, we are drawing on the power and grace of God.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Priesthood is given us for two purposes, first, that we may ourselves receive exaltation, and, second, that we may be the means of helping others to obtain like blessings" (*The Way to Perfection* [1935], 221).

Sisters share in priesthood blessings

There is order to the work of God. In one of the first meetings of the Relief Society 154 years ago, the Prophet Joseph Smith charged the sisters with helping to save souls (see Relief Society minutes, 9 June 1842, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our purpose has not changed. It is significant to me that the women were organized under the authority of the priesthood. We sustain the priesthood and are sustained by its power. The sisters of the Church, like the one from Mistolar, treasure our opportunity to be full partakers of the spiritual blessings of the priesthood.

Each of us can be directed and blessed in our eternal progression by receiving these blessings. The ordinances, covenants, sealings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are essential for exaltation. There are a host of individual priesthood blessings as well. Priesthood blessings give us direction; they lift our sights; they encourage and inspire us; they prompt our commitment. We can all be partakers of these spiritual blessings.

Baptism is the critical priesthood ordinance which opens the door to eternal life for each one of us. It is the benchmark from which we count our many blessings

because this is when our accountability to follow Jesus Christ and live His gospel begins. And then each week as we partake of the sacrament, we are reminded to “always remember him” (D&C 20:79). What a blessing this visual reminder is.

When we are confirmed, the heavens open and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. By and through the Spirit, blessings of the priesthood flow into our lives—the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us, to be with us, to bring us peace, to testify of truth, to bear testimony of Jesus Christ. These spiritual blessings direct the course of our lives. And the lives of those around us are richer in things of the Spirit, for blessings are magnified as they are shared.

When hands are laid on my head in a personal priesthood blessing, I feel enveloped in the love of the Savior. I know that the brother who is administering that blessing is acting in the name of the Lord. In Mistolar, 39 of the men held the Melchizedek Priesthood—and used it to bless their people.

Priesthood brings peace and healing

When I was a child I received a blessing of healing, which I attribute to the power of the priesthood and the faith of my believing parents. Several years later I distinctly remember the pressure of my grandfather's hands on my head when, as a patriarch, he blessed me with a guide for my life, an account of promises for me, conditional on my faithfulness.

I have found a distinct difference in my approach to a calling after I have been set apart. Some calls bring a feeling of total wonder—“I wonder why they called me; I wonder what I should do; I wonder who should help me.” I remember the peace that came when my counselors and I were set apart as general officers of the Relief Society by the First Presidency. The setting was formal yet warm. I was addressed by my full name,

and then came quiet concentration, personal direction, and wise counsel.

I felt the same sweet spirit when my husband, Joe, was ordained a bishop and again when he gave our oldest son a father's blessing before Dave left for the Persian Gulf. Then our son, in turn, blessed his wife and baby daughter. This brought such solace during a frightening time.

This morning I asked my husband for a special blessing to complete my preparation to speak to you. It is difficult to put into words what we feel in response to the Lord's words, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

Blessings include spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are powerful priesthood blessings. They increase our capacity as we develop them by drawing on the storehouse in heaven. One gift I value is discernment. When the Lord spoke to the woman at the well, He offered her living “water springing up into everlasting life.” He discerned her needs. His words startled her: “Go, call thy husband, and come hither.” She answered, “I have no husband,” and Jesus said, “Thou hast well said.” And “the woman saith unto him, . . . I perceive that thou art a prophet.” (See John 4:14–19.)

Many women have the gift of discernment. Often blessed with the power to know and understand beyond their experience, women draw on this strength as they visit monthly to teach in the homes or to assess needs as directed by the bishop. We use it as we nurture our children and teach them the gospel. We discern, by the power of God given to us through His Spirit, that “one thing is needful” (Luke 10:42). Nothing we do is more important than the work of righteousness in our homes.

Discernment is critical for our times. President Boyd K. Packer has said, “We need women with the gift of discernment

who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 8). That is exactly what we need.

Priesthood blessings and the temple

The temple is the matchless setting for receiving priesthood blessings. In this holy house we are endowed individually and then sealed together as families for eternity. Priesthood authority ensures that the covenants we make in the temple are everlasting. The gifts of exaltation deepen the partnership of men and women as they commit to covenants and share the blessings of the temple. And when we attend the temple, we are blessed with knowledge of "things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

A Relief Society president in Ghana understood the "glories" related to the temple. Talking to some visitors to her ward, she took a small folded piece of paper from her purse and said reverently, "I am a temple recommend holder." It may be years before she can afford to go to the temple in London or Johannesburg, but she has a reminder that she is worthy and willing. The Lord asks no more. (See Don L. Searle, "Ghana: A Household of Faith," *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 37-38.)

Follow priesthood leaders

We have been taught in this conference by prophets, seers, revelators, and other General Authorities who bear the priesthood of God. Their messages are for every member of the Church. When we have "ears to hear" (Matthew 11:15), we can recognize that the Lord is saying, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

I want to bear my testimony that I know this Church is led by a prophet of

God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Church administration on the general and local levels is evidence of the blessing of the priesthood, for this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and He is directing the work. The Lord has said, "Let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

The Saints in Mistolar knew God. They had a testimony of His gospel. They were partakers of the many spiritual blessings brought by the power of the priesthood, blessings described in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And . . . all they who receive this priesthood, receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom" (D&C 84:35-38).

That we may all be "partakers of the glories" in our Father's kingdom is my prayer. And I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Elder Francisco J. Viñas, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Francisco J. Viñas

Listening to the voice of the Lord

I have been reflecting lately on the importance that listening to the voice of the Lord has had in my life and in the lives of other people, especially when this voice comes through His servants and under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The fact that I am able to be here this afternoon is a blessing for which I must express appreciation to my parents, who, many years ago when the missionaries came to them, heard for the first time the voice of the Lord through His servants and hearkened to it. That changed the course of their lives and was a great influence in the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Growing up in the Church in Uruguay and being a witness of this wonderful work in other countries of South America, I have carefully observed the effect that diligently and humbly listening to the voice of the Lord has had in the lives of people. I observed the same effect when I went back to live in Spain and saw the change produced in the lives of people when they diligently listened to the servants of the Lord and developed sufficient faith to obey the commandments. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The same promise that the people of ancient Israel received is valid today:

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

Admonition repeated in all dispensations

The admonition to listen attentively to the word of the Lord has been repeated in all dispensations. In His earthly ministry, the Savior frequently declared these words: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15; see also 13:9, 43; Mark 4:23; Luke 8:8; 14:35). He also taught that "he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24).

The preface the Lord gave to the Doctrine and Covenants, which we know as section 1, begins by saying, "Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together" (D&C 1:1).

King Benjamin began his powerful sermon with these words: "You that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view" (Mosiah 2:9).

This admonition to open our ears to listen does not always receive the same response. While some people indicate a willingness to listen attentively and to be obedient to the words of the Lord, others seem to close their ears, not wanting to hear or to obey. There are others who are slow to hear but who eventually do listen and become obedient. For all of these people, the result of their attitudes concerning the voice of the Lord will bring into their lives consequences which, in many instances, may be of an eternal nature.

Saul's pride is an obstacle to listening

An example of those who close their ears can be found in chapter 15 of 1 Samuel when Saul, who had been anointed king over Israel, set aside the counsel and warnings of the prophet of the Lord and tried to justify the error of his ways. Samuel the prophet reproved Saul and taught him that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." He then indicated to Saul the consequences of his attitude: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23). From the example of Saul we learn that pride is a great obstacle in listening to the voice of the Lord.

Naaman is persuaded to listen

In chapter 5 of 2 Kings we read the story of Naaman, a general in the Syrian army who sought help from the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. The prophet sent one of his servants to say to Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). This response was not pleasing to Naaman, who went away in anger. Thanks to the intervention of his servants, who persuaded Naaman to follow the instructions of the prophet, finally "went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (v. 14).

From his experience we learn that frequently the words of the prophets do not agree with our expectations or with our way of seeing things. Sometimes it seems that we need someone else, in addition to the prophets, to persuade us to listen to the voice of the Lord.

A widow in Zarephath listens

In chapter 17 of 1 Kings we read about a humble widow who lived in Zarephath during a time of great scarcity of food because of the drought. This humble woman possessed no more than a handful of meal and a little oil for herself and for her son. With these she planned to prepare a final meal and then die. The prophet Elijah asked her to first give him something to eat, with the promise that if she did so the meal and the oil would not decrease until it rained again:

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:15-16).

Thus we see how, when people listen to and accept with humility and simple faith the words of the prophets, they receive the Lord's blessings.

Develop the ability to hear

In summary, the voice of the Lord may be received by listening to the Lord's servants, studying the scriptures, and being prompted through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And for those who not only hear but also hearken to the Lord's voice, the Lord calls them "mine elect," "for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (D&C 29:7).

I believe that our ability and our willingness to hear can be increased and that our ears can be opened to hear clearly the voice of the Lord. In section 136, verse 32, we find a guideline which will help us do this: "Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear" (D&C

136:32). Through humility and prayer we can develop and improve our capacity to be attentive to the words of life which will bless our lives and the lives of our families.

This conference is a great opportunity to listen to the voice of the Lord, to follow the counsel given, and to give heed to the teachings we are receiving. I know that God the Eternal Father lives, that Jesus Christ also lives and is our Savior, our Redeemer. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of the

Lord and that this is the true Church. I testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of the divinely ordained role of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you. We have just listened to Elder Francisco J. Viñas of the Seventy.

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will now speak to us.

Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr

I acknowledge this call to serve with gratitude for the many teachers, leaders, and friends who have touched my life. This call brings with it an increased sense of love and gratitude for goodly parents, my wonderful wife and family, and a marvelous corps of faithful missionaries with whom we served in the Texas Dallas Mission. This call also brings an increased sense of love and appreciation for the life and teachings of the Savior, from which we learn principles that should govern our lives.

"Behold your little ones"

Following His Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus Christ visited, taught, and blessed the righteous inhabitants of ancient America. The Book of Mormon records those glorious events and stands as another testament of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the reality of His Resurrection. As the Savior taught and blessed those faithful people, He invited them to bring their little children to Him and to set them round about Him. He then knelt and prayed with words so marvelous and great they could not be written—words which filled the souls of the people with inconceivable joy. The

sacred record tells us that Jesus said unto the multitude:

"Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

"And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

"And when he had done this he wept again;

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: *Behold your little ones*" (3 Nephi 17:20–23; italics added).

When the Savior invited the multitude to behold their little ones, was He speaking in the collective sense of a group of little children? Or was He drawing their attention, and ours, to the individual nature and importance of each of those little *ones*—each of those little individuals? I believe that by His example the Savior was teaching us of the individual and tender care we should give to each one of our little children—indeed to each of our Heavenly Father's children. It may be the lovable toddler or the wayward teen, the grieving widow or the grateful woman for whom all is well. It may even be your own son or daughter or your own husband or wife. Each is

an individual. Each has divine potential. And each must be spiritually nourished and temporally cared for with love, tenderness, and individual attention.

Remember and nourish each person

The prophet Lehi exhorted his wayward sons, Laman and Lemuel, with “all the feeling of a tender parent” (1 Nephi 8:37). This is the Savior’s way. This is as it should be in our families and in the Church. Moroni was telling us this when he said of those received into the Church by baptism, “They were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God” (Moroni 6:4). Remembered and nourished, one by one, name by name!

The Savior taught us this principle in the parable of the lost sheep. As the shepherd left the ninety and nine and searched until the lost sheep was found, so also are we to go after him who is lost and continue the search until he is found. (See Matthew 18:12–14.) And once he is found, our work is not done until we bring him safely home, rejoicing. This is the objective of the gospel of Jesus Christ and must be the objective of all the programs and activities of the Church—to bring the children of our Father in Heaven home, and home to stay.

The power of one person

While the Savior taught us the importance of the one, He also taught us of the power of one. He showed us the power and influence He alone possessed as our Savior, Redeemer, and Judge. He was alone in Gethsemane when He offered Himself as the sacred offering in that great atoning sacrifice—a sacrifice which He sealed at Golgotha with His freely given life. Feeling alone there, His painful utterance “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew

27:46) teaches us that while the Father was never far from His Beloved Son, the infinite Atonement was, of necessity, wrought by the power of one—one person standing alone, even the Only Begotten Son of God.

The power of one person is apparent throughout the scriptures as we see the influence of an Abraham, of a Joseph, a Moses, of Peter and Paul, of a Nephi, of Abinadi, Alma, and Ammon, and of Mormon and Moroni. There were Sarah and Rebekah and Esther and Hannah, and Sariah and Mary and so many more—even Joseph and Emma. Yes, these were mighty men and women of God; but they were often alone, standing as one, even as each of us on occasion must stand alone in a sometimes hostile world. Yet as these valiant servants of the Lord were not entirely alone, neither will we be if we are worthy of His companionship and the companionship of the Holy Spirit. The Lord gave this promise to His faithful servants: “For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). We may be one, but we need not be entirely alone.

Sarah Ann Meeks made a difference

The power and influence one person can have is enormous. It was one Sarah Ann Meeks who paid what seemed to be her ultimate sacrifice as she stood alone on the doorstep of her home in far-off England nearly a century and a half ago. Her father met her there with a small bundle containing a few of her belongings and with these words, “You join that church and you must never set foot in my home again.” Unfortunately that was the last she saw of her family. Alone? Very much alone! She could have bowed to that impossible, heart-wrenching rejection. But no—she loved the Lord. She had been touched by the Spirit and knew

that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to the earth in its fulness. She knew that she must stand as a witness to the truthfulness of this message. She knew that she could make a difference.

From that one stalwart woman has sprung a progeny of faithful Latter-day Saints difficult to number. Literally hundreds of her descendants have stood as witnesses all around the world testifying to the reality of the Restoration of the gospel—the same message she embraced as she stood alone. One of those descendants now stands here as an especial witness of the Savior Jesus Christ, bearing solemn testimony to all the world that God the Eternal Father lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that leading The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints today is a living and loving prophet of God, serving with all the meaning that sacred title implies.

It is this testimony I leave with you, praying that we will treat each one of our Heavenly Father's children lovingly, tenderly, and individually, as He would have us treat them, and praying also that we will always be mindful of the power each one of us has to make a difference and to influence the world in which we live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will next speak to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

God's will revealed during conference

We are drawing to the close of another magnificent general conference of the Church. We have been blessed with earnest prayers, magnificent music, and truly inspired teachings. In just a few minutes we will hear concluding counsel from our prophet and president of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley. A general conference of this Church is a remarkable occasion indeed—it is an institutional declaration that the heavens are open, that divine guidance is as real today as it was for the ancient house of Israel, that God our Heavenly Father loves us and speaks His will through a living prophet.

The great Isaiah foresaw such moments and foretold this very setting in which we find ourselves:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above

the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."¹

Of such comforting latter-day direction, including its divine source, Isaiah would go on to say: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."²

Jesus gives peace, strength, and hope

Peace and good tidings; good tidings and peace. These are among the ultimate blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings a troubled world and the troubled people who live in it—solutions to personal struggles and human sinfulness, a source of strength for days of weariness

and hours of genuine despair. This entire general conference and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which convenes it declare that it is the Only Begotten Son of God Himself who gives us this help and this hope. Such assurance is as "firm as the mountains around us."³ As the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi made clear in a slight variation of Isaiah's exclamation:

"O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is *the founder of peace*, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people."⁴

Ultimately it is Christ who is beautiful upon the mountain. And it is His merciful promise of "peace in this world," His good tidings of "eternal life in the world to come"⁵ that make us fall at His feet and call His name blessed and give thanks for the restoration of His true and living Church.

Seeking peace that only God can bring

The search for peace is one of the ultimate quests of the human soul. We all have highs and lows, but such times come and they usually always go. Kind neighbors assist. Beautiful sunshine brings encouragement. A good night's sleep usually works wonders. But there are times in all of our lives when deep sorrow or suffering or fear or loneliness makes us cry out for the peace which only God Himself can bring. These are times of piercing spiritual hunger when even the dearest friends cannot fully come to our aid.

Perhaps you know people in the broad congregation of this conference, or in your local ward or stake, or in your own home—courageous people who are carrying heavy burdens and feeling private pain, who are walking through the dark valleys of this world's tribulation. Some may be desperately worried about a husband or a wife or a child, worried

about their health or their happiness or their faithfulness in keeping the commandments. Some are living with physical pain, or emotional pain, or disabilities that come with age. Some are troubled as to how to make ends meet financially, and some ache with the private loneliness of an empty house or an empty room or simply empty arms.

These beloved people seek the Lord and His word with particular urgency, often revealing their true emotions only when the scriptures are opened or when the hymns are sung or when the prayers are offered. Sometimes only then do the rest of us realize they feel near the end of their strength—they are tired in brain and body and heart, they wonder if they can get through another week or another day or sometimes just another hour. They are desperate for the Lord's help, and they know that in such times of extremity nothing else will do.

Christ, angels, and prophets seek to help

Well, at least one of the purposes of general conference and the teachings of the prophets down through the ages is to declare to these very people that the Lord is equally fervent in trying to reach them, that when there is trouble, His hopes and His striving and His efforts greatly exceed our own, and it never ceases.

We have been promised, "He that keepeth [us] will not slumber, . . . nor [will he] sleep."⁶

Christ and His angels and His prophets forever labor to buoy up our spirits, steady our nerves, calm our hearts, send us forth with renewed strength and resolute hope. They wish all to know that "if God be for us, who can be against us?"⁷ In the world we shall have tribulation, but we are to be of good cheer. Christ has overcome the world.⁸ Through His suffering and His obedience He has earned and rightly bears the crown of "Prince of Peace."

Obedience and repentance bring peace

In that spirit we declare to all the world that for real and abiding peace to come, we must strive to be more like that exemplary Son of God. Many among us are trying to do that. We salute you for your obedience, your forbearance, your waiting faithfully upon the Lord for the strength you seek, which will surely come. Some of us, on the other hand, need to make some changes, need to make greater effort in gospel living. And change we can. The very beauty of the word *repentance* is the promise of escaping old problems and old habits and old sorrows and old sins. It is among the most hopeful and encouraging—and yes, most peaceful—words in the gospel vocabulary. In seeking true peace, some of us need to improve what has to be improved, confess what needs to be confessed, forgive what has to be forgiven, and forget what should be forgotten in order that serenity can come to us. If there is a commandment we are breaking, and as a result it is breaking us and hurting those who love us, let us call down the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to help us, to free us, to lead us through repentance to that peace “which passeth all understanding.”⁹

And when God has forgiven us, which He is so eternally anxious to do, may we have the good sense to walk away from those problems, to leave them alone, to let the past bury the past. If one of you has made a mistake, even a serious mistake, but you have done all you can according to the teachings of the Lord and the governance of the Church to confess it and feel sorrow for it and set it as right as can be, then trust in God, walk into His light, and leave those ashes behind you. Someone once said that repentance is the first pressure we feel when drawn to the bosom of God. For real peace may I recommend an immediate rush to the bosom of God, leaving behind you all that would bring sorrow

to your soul or heartache to those who love you. “Depart from evil,” the scripture says, “and do good.”¹⁰

Forgive others to find peace

Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven. In this we participate in the very essence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Surely the most majestic moment of that fateful Friday, when nature convulsed and the veil of the temple was rent, was that unspeakably merciful moment when Christ said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”¹¹ As our advocate with the Father, He is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine.

Here, as in all things, Jesus set the standard for us to follow. Life is too short to be spent nursing animosities or keeping a box score of offenses against us—you know, no runs, no hits, all errors. We don’t want God to remember our sins, so there is something fundamentally wrong in our relentlessly trying to remember those of others.

When we have been hurt, undoubtedly God takes into account what wrongs were done to us and what provocations there are for our resentments, but clearly the more provocation there is and the more excuse we can find for our hurt, all the more reason for us to forgive and be delivered from the destructive hell of such poisonous venom and anger.¹² It is one of those ironies of godhood that in order to find peace, the offended as well as the offender must engage the principle of forgiveness.

Our trials have a purpose

Yes, peace is a very precious commodity, a truly heartfelt need, and there are many things we can do to achieve it. But—for whatever reason—life has its moments when uninterrupted peace may

seem to elude us for a season. We may wonder why there are such times in life, particularly when we may be trying harder than we have ever tried to live worthy of God's blessings and obtain His help. When problems or sorrows or sadness come and they *don't* seem to be our fault, what are we to make of their unwelcome appearance?

With time and perspective we recognize that such problems in life do come for a purpose, if only to allow the one who faces such despair to be convinced that he really does need divine strength beyond himself, that she really does need the offer of heaven's hand. Those who feel no need for mercy usually never seek it and almost never bestow it. Those who have never had a heartache or a weakness or felt lonely or forsaken never have had to cry unto heaven for relief of such personal pain. Surely it is better to find the goodness of God and the grace of Christ, even at the price of despair, than to risk living our lives in a moral or material complacency that has never felt any need for faith or forgiveness, any need for redemption or relief.

A life without problems or limitations or challenges—life without “opposition in all things,”¹³ as Lehi phrased it—would paradoxically but in very fact be less rewarding and less ennobling than one which confronts—even frequently confronts—difficulty and disappointment and sorrow. As beloved Eve said, were it not for the difficulties faced in a fallen world, neither she nor Adam nor any of the rest of us ever would have known “the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”¹⁴

“The better angels of our nature”

So life has its oppositions and its conflicts, and the gospel of Jesus Christ has answers and assurances. In a time of terrible civil warfare, one of the most gifted leaders ever to strive to hold a na-

tion together said what could be said of marriages and families and friendships. Praying for peace, pleading for peace, seeking peace in any way that would not compromise union, Abraham Lincoln said in those dark, dark days of his First Inaugural: “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,” he said, “will yet swell . . . when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”¹⁵

The better angels of our nature. That is much of what the Church and general conference and the gospel of Jesus Christ are about—the appeal today and tomorrow and forever to be better, to be cleaner, to be kinder, to be holier; to seek peace and always be believing.

God's gift of sanctifying renewal

I have personally known in my own life the realization of the promise “that the everlasting God, . . . the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is [he] weary.” I am a witness that “he giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”¹⁶

I know that in times of fear or fatigue, “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”¹⁷

We receive the gift of such majestic might and sanctifying renewal through the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has overcome the world, and if we will take upon us His name and “walk in His paths” and keep our covenants with Him, we shall, ere long, have peace. Such a reward is not only possible; it is certain.

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”¹⁸

Of Him and His good tidings, of the publication of His peace in this conference and in this His true Church, and of His living prophet who is about to speak to us, I bear grateful and joyful witness in the merciful name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:2-3.
2. Isaiah 52:7.
3. "Carry On," *Hymns*, no. 255.
4. Mosiah 15:18; italics added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
6. Psalm 121:3-4.
7. Romans 8:31.
8. See John 16:33.
9. Philippians 4:7.
10. Psalm 34:14.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Adapted from George MacDonald.
13. 2 Nephi 2:11.
14. Moses 5:11.
15. Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, 4 Mar. 1861.
16. Isaiah 40:28-29.
17. Isaiah 40:31.
18. 3 Nephi 22:10.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon

Youth Chorus; the Primary children's choir from stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah; the Provo MTC men's choir; and the Tabernacle Choir; and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference. The music has been outstanding.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters—a great army of interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

And we are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will be offered by Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A remarkable outpouring of the Spirit

Just a few words as we bring to a close this great general conference of the Church. It's been a wonderful occasion. The weather has favored us here in Salt Lake City. This is a beautiful season of the year, with the fall flowers in bloom.

The harvest is largely in, and by and large it has been good. We are grateful for the mercies of the Lord upon us.

We have been able to meet together in peace and comfort and security here in the sacred precincts of Temple Square, where our forebears built so well that we might be so comfortable.

We have had unprecedented coverage of the conference, reaching across the continents and the oceans to people far and wide.

Though we are far removed from some of you, we feel of your brotherhood and express our great appreciation for you.

Most importantly, we have enjoyed a remarkable and wonderful outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord. The Brethren and the sisters have spoken to us, and we have been blessed by their messages.

I hope that we will long remember what we have heard. I hope that we will take the time to read the talks which will be reprinted in the *Ensign*. I hope that each of us may have been touched in a personal way by something that was said, and that as a result of that, there will be a turnabout in any unseemly attitude or action.

Anniversary days

As Brother Ballard has reminded us, this is an anniversary year, and next year will be another anniversary year when we commemorate the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in this valley in 1847. There will be much of remembering. It will all be to the good. All of us need to be reminded of the past. It is from history that we gain knowledge which can save us from repeating mistakes and on which we can build for the future.

These are days for remembering and celebrating the past. These are anniversary days.

The rescue of destitute pioneers

I think of what occurred in this Tabernacle 140 years ago this Sunday. I spoke of it from this pulpit some years back, but I wish to mention it again as we bring to a close this conference.

I take you back to the general conference of October 1856. On Saturday of that conference, Franklin D. Richards

and a handful of associates arrived in the valley. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over the long trail from Scottsbluff to this valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts. They were accompanied by two wagon trains which had been assigned to assist them. They had reached the area of the last crossing of the North Platte River. Ahead of them lay a trail that was uphill all the way to the Continental Divide with many, many miles beyond that. They were in desperate trouble. Winter had come early. Snow-laden winds were howling across the highlands of what is now western Nebraska and Wyoming. Our people were hungry; their carts and their wagons were breaking down; their oxen dying. The people themselves were dying. All of them would perish unless they were rescued.

I think President Young did not sleep that night. I think visions of those destitute, freezing, dying people paraded through his mind.

The next morning he came to the old Tabernacle which stood on this square. He said to the people:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. . . . Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here.' . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. . . .

"I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want

to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains*" (in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [1960], 120-21).

That afternoon, food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women.

The next morning, horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of October there were 250 teams on the road to give relief.

Wonderful sermons have been preached from this pulpit, my brethren and sisters. But none has been more eloquent than that spoken by President Young in those circumstances.

Reach out to help, lift, feed, and nurture

Stories of the beleaguered Saints and of their suffering and death will be repeated again and again next year. Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful that those days of pioneering are behind us. I am thankful that we do not have brethren and sisters stranded in the snow, freezing and dying, while trying to get to this, their Zion in the mountains. But there are people, not a few, whose circumstances are desperate and who cry out for help and relief.

There are so many who are hungry and destitute across this world who need help. I am grateful to be able to say that

we are assisting many who are not of our faith but whose needs are serious and whom we have the resources to help. But we need not go so far afield. We have some of our own who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.

There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern which speaks of love. There are those who were once warm in the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray that each of us, having participated in this great conference, would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives.

I leave with you my beloved friends, my co-workers in this wonderful cause, my testimony of the truth of this work, the work of the Almighty, the work of the Redeemer of mankind. I leave with you my love and my blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder W. Craig Zwick offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary children's choir from stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah. Sister Kay Asay conducted the choir, and Sister Linda Margetts was at the organ.

At the general priesthood session a men's choir from the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, provided the music. Brother Douglas Brenchley con-

ducted the choir, and Brother John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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